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AMY GRANT,

OR

THE ONE MOTIVE.

AMY GRANT,

OR

THE ONE MOTIVE.

A TALE

DESIGNED PRINCIPALLY FOR THE TEACHERS OF THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.

"THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE."
Rev. i. 7.

OXFORD AND LONDON:
JOHN HENRY PARKER.
M DCCC LIV.

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TO

ALL WHO ARE ENGAGED

IN THE DEEPLY RESPONSIBLE OFFICE

OF TRAINING THE LAMBS OF CHRIST'S FOLD,

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED,

WITH THE EARNEST PRAYER,

THAT THEY MAY NEVER FORGET,

THE AWFULNESS OF THE WOE

DENOUNCED AGAINST THOSE

WHO OFFEND ONE OF CHRIST'S LITTLE ONES;

AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PROMISE

TO THOSE WHO DO AND TEACH

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS.

PREFACE.

THE following pages need but few words of introduction: all who are concerned in teaching must have seen that the great danger of the present day is to make education consist in the cultivation of the intellect, and this though religion apparently is not neglected. The children in most parish schools have a knowledge, and an ability to answer on most sacred subjects, which those of the last generation certainly had not; but do we see generally in the young people who have grown up under this system, the fruits of holy living, which unless education produces, it fails of its desired end?

It is to be feared that the answer must be negative, and further that the cause of failure is too often to be attributed to the instructors; they have not learnt to realize the greatness of the work to which they are called; that it is theirs to mould young hearts, to give a bias to young souls, to clothe young Christian soldiers with their armour before they are engaged in the actual warfare of the world. But this cannot be done by mere talking; it must be by

heart speaking to heart; the teacher must have "one motive," and perhaps this little tale may, with the blessing of God, be the means of causing some of those engaged in the holy task of education to understand the true nature of their calling, and to search out whether the fault of ill success be not in themselves; whether they are indeed working for heavenly fruits, or whether they are not content to labour for the present, and that which may be seen and commended of men.



CHAPTER I.

"These border lands are calm and still
And solemn are their silent shades,
And my heart welcomes them until
The light of life's long evening fades."

The Dove on the Cross.

It was a lovely evening. The day had been almost oppressively warm, but now the sun was fast sinking, and the gentle breeze that stirred the trees seemed to refresh all nature. The dying rays of the sun shone on the little lancet window of a church, and fell in strange bright colours on the font, from the reflection of the small bits of painted glass that yet remained of what had once been a representation of the wondrous baptism in the river Jordan.

It was all so calm and peaceful. The old church with its quiet churchyard so neatly kept, the gravel walks so smooth and free from weeds, and close to the churchyard, parted only by a low wall and a bright border of flowers, the pleasant old-fashioned rectory. Yes, it did look calm; no sound was to be heard, and all around was so still, it seemed to speak peace to the heart. And one there was who felt its soothing power.

In an upper room of that pleasant old rectory, on a sofa drawn near the window, lay one whose

sun too seemed fast sinking. Her face was turned toward the church, and her eyes shone with unnatural brightness, as they gazed earnestly on a cross in the churchyard that was just opposite her window; after some moments they were closed, the lips moved, and a bright smile passed over the face. To watch that face one would have thought converse was being held with another, and that joyful tidings were heard. And so in truth it was, for holy and full of joy were the words that seemed to be spoken in her ear, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and, "Father, I thank Thee," were the words that she almost unconsciously whispered in answer.

She thanked Him that life, which but three short years ago had seemed to her a bright summer day, had now been stained by wintry winds and dreary storms; that this earth was no longer thought of as a home, but as a "lodging of a night."

It was but three years since she had left her father's stately home and exchanged it for one far less stately, but not less happy, the quiet rectory of Elverton. One year of calm happiness followed, increased the next by the blessing of becoming a mother. But this joy was soon turned to sorrow. Her darling child, just at that time when his large eyes learned to follow her as she moved, and his bright smile to welcome her as she hung over him, was taken from her.

It was a piercing sorrow to the young mother, and

at first she almost sunk under it, but her husband's prayers and holy counsel helped the heart that was well nigh bowed down, to rise in entire resignation to the Lord who gives and takes away.

This sorrow did not pass and leave no fruit behind. She looked on it as a call from God, "Give Me thine heart," and earnestly did she strive to answer to the call. And when in mercy sickness followed, she was able meekly and thankfully to bend beneath the cross laid upon her. A slight cough neglected, ended, as it so often does, in consumption. And now after nearly a year's illness, it seemed that ere the bright flowers of summer had faded, that quiet churchyard would number her amongst its inhabitants.

It was said her eyes rested on a cross: it marked the spot where her darling lay. How long she had thus remained in solemn thought she knew not. But the church clock striking eight roused her. She rang a little bell that was on the table beside her, it was quickly answered. "Wood," she said as the servant entered, "have you heard what time Amy must leave to-morrow?"

"The coach starts at half past six, ma'am, to meet the eight o'clock train."

"Oh, then, go and tell her to come to me."

The kind attendant looked anxiously at her mistress as if she almost dreaded to obey her order. She understood the look, and said "Never mind, Wood, I am not more tired than usual, and Amy must spend these last hours with me."

Wood left the room, and in a few moments a gentle knock was heard and a young girl about nineteen entered. She looked very sad, but was evidently making a great effort to maintain her composure, but the low kind voice that said, "Come to me, Amy," almost overcame her.

Amy Grant was an orphan. Her widowed mother in her last lingering sickness had felt much anxiety at leaving her only child, then only twelve years old, alone and unprotected. But this one earthly care was removed when the kind young lady at the hall, whose almost daily visits had so comforted her, promised to take charge of her beloved child. This promise was strictly fulfilled, and when her death left Amy motherless, Ellen Seymour gained her parents' consent, that the poor young orphan should be brought to the hall. She considered Amy her peculiar charge, and spent hours every day teaching her. Her sweet gentle disposition made her very dear to her young mistress, and when, three years after, she left home on her marriage with Mr. Leslie, Amy was taken with her. As she grew up she had a great desire to undertake the office of a school-mistress, it was just the occupation Mrs. Leslie would have desired for her. And as Mr. Leslie, in talking with her on the subject, found that she really wished to undertake this most important office from a desire to serve God, she was sent to a training institution. At the time of which we are speaking she had returned home, being considered quite competent to enter on the care of a school. And it was not long

before an opportunity of her doing so occurred; a request from a friend, for whom Mr. Leslie had a great regard, that he would assist him in finding a mistress for his school, made him decide that it would be right to mention Amy. It was exactly the situation he had wished to meet with for her. And though it was a great trial to Mrs. Leslie to part with her now, she fully agreed with her husband in the desirableness of the plan, and felt thankful in the knowledge that she should leave Amy in such good care. Every thing being settled, she was to leave her beloved friend and mistress and set out the day following that of which we are now speaking. That it was to be a final parting in this world neither could conceal from themselves. Mrs. Leslie, indeed, did not for a moment wish to shut her eyes to the conviction, that her days were almost ended. But poor Amy could hardly bear to think of it. It was a bitter trial. Since her dear mother's death she had clung to her young mistress as her only friend. And in truth they had been friends. No wonder then that Amy's heart should sink, when that sweet voice which had never been heard without pleasure was now to speak to her for the last time.

After having in vain tried to still her agitation, she threw herself on her knees by the sofa, and pressing to her lips the hand that had taken hers, the grief which had been violently pent up forced its way, and deep sobs which made her tremble shewed the suffering that was going on within. The calm

though sad voice of Mrs. Leslie soothed her when she spoke.

"My dear child," she said, "it is a heavy trial for us both, but we must not sink under it. I did not think when your dear mother committed you to my care, how soon I should have to resign that charge, but I feel no anxious fears, the Father of the fatherless will be with you. And I do not leave you without an earthly friend; you have, dear Amy, a most true one in Mr. Leslie." She stopped, for she already felt her strength failing, and she had much she wished to say. A fresh burst of sobs was all the answer Amy could give.

After a few moments pause, in which Mrs. Leslie had mentally asked for a blessing on her words, she spoke again. "Dear Amy, I know you are aware of the very great responsibility of the office you are entering upon. It seems as if we could hardly realize how great that responsibility is. To you it will be given to aid God's minister in training souls for heaven. To you the lambs of Christ's fold will be in a measure committed, and how awful if through your neglect one of these little ones is offended. My child, I almost tremble for you, and yet I need not, if, as I know it is, your trust is placed in Him who never fails those who seek Him. You feel, do you not, dear Amy, that it is to Him alone you are to look for any blessing on your work."

"I do, indeed I do," said the poor girl earnestly, while her eyes were fixed in love and almost veneration on Mrs. Leslie's face,

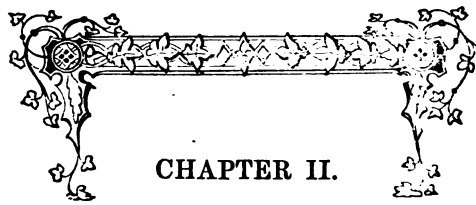
"And remember too, my child, that it is not by teaching only that you will influence others, but by example more than all. Your pupils will be quick in observing whether the instruction you give them in the school-room is carried out in your daily life. You may speak to them on the duty of reverence for holy things, but if they see the slightest irreverence in your manner, in the way in which the Bible is read, or even handled, or in the wandering eye at prayers, your lessons will be nearly thrown away. In all other things it will be the same. I know that none of this is new to you, dear Amy; it has often been spoken of before between us; but remember, that you will often be tempted to relax; those who desire to devote themselves in earnest to God's service, must be ever on their guard, for it is by little and little the enemy of souls will tempt them to lay aside their armour." Again Mrs. Leslie stopped, and again Amy's earnest eyes seemed to thank her from her heart for all she had said. She did not dare to speak, for she felt that she could not command her emotion, and she saw by the bright burning spots on her dear mistress's cheek how much she was exerting herself.

Mrs. Leslie herself felt that she must rest, so leaning back, she took Amy's hand in both hers and said, "I have much, much more I long to say, dear child, but I cannot speak more now. If God gives me strength, I will write soon after you have left me, and may the blessing of the Almighty ever rest on you, and on your labours."

In a few minutes Mr. Leslie came in to pray beside his wife. Amy staid and felt soothed by the calm, solemn words. When their little evening service was ended, Mr. Leslie rose. And after giving his wife the Church's solemn benediction for her sick, he turned to poor Amy, and laying his hands on her head, in the same holy words commended her to "God's gracious mercy and protection."

Amy prayed for strength, for the hour of parting was come. And to part from one who had been to her as a mother and a sister, was a grief that seemed almost too heavy to bear.

"Be comforted, my child," were Mrs. Leslie's first words; "we shall, by God's mercy, soon meet again. Oh, how short life now seems to me; it will quickly pass, and God may vouchsafe me to welcome you beside the river of the water of life. Look on to the end, dearest Amy, and work with that end ever in view, and may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit;" she pressed a fervent kiss on Amy's forehead and sunk back exhausted. Amy rose to go, but the sorrows of years seemed concentrated in that moment. "Go, my child," Mr. Leslie whispered, "look to the Lord for strength."



CHAPTER II.

"Without the world may be dark and drear,
With not one to whisper a word of cheer,
But wheresoever on earth we roam
The House of our God is His exile's home."

Wreath of Lilies.

A BRIGHT sun shone the next morning into a pleasant room, where one sat weeping who needed not the rising of that sun to wake her from her slumbers.

With a sad heart, but a calm demeanour, poor Amy made the last preparations for her journey. She had slept little, but she had thought and prayed much, and she felt strengthened to take up the Cross her Lord saw best for her.

One of the servants brought her some breakfast; she tried to eat but could not.

"Is it time to go?" she asked.

"It will be in ten minutes," was the answer.

"Then I will be with you in that time."

The servant understood her wish to be alone, and left the room. When she was gone, Amy crept softly to Mrs. Leslie's door, and sinking gently on her knees, she prayed that all her kindness to her might be repaid a hundred-fold.

The ten minutes were gone; the coach was heard in the distance. And before Amy could understand what was passing, she had left that home which had indeed been to her "a holy home," a shelter in the weary pilgrimage of life.

The day wore away. The long journey was nearly over, and Amy roused herself from her thoughts to remember what was to be done. The train stopped, and the name of the station where her journey was to end was called out.

A boy was waiting to carry her box and shew her the way; and she set off on the walk to her new home.

She felt little inclined to see strange faces, and to have to make acquaintance with strangers. And a sad lonely sensation came over her, as she followed her guide up the winding path that led from the station to the village of Lignwood. But as they got nearer the top of the hill, a sound greeted her ears that seemed at once to remind her she was not alone, and almost to reproach her for having felt so lonely.

The church bell was going for evening service. Her guide noticed her awakened attention and quickened pace at the sound, and said, "Do you want to go to evening prayers? for I can take you a short cut to the church, and leave your box at our cottage and take it on for you afterwards."

Amy thanked him, and seemed so grateful and happy, her companion was quite pleased, for he had been wondering what made her look so sad, and quite longing to ask her what was the matter.

They quickly reached the church, and how soothing was the beautiful evening service to Amy. Her thoughts turned to those whose evening prayer was said at this hour, and she realized the blessedness of the Communion of Saints. The words of inspiration sounded as if the Lord Himself spoke to her heart, and told her to run with patience the race that was set before her; and as the holy words went on and spoke of the loving chastening of the Lord, a calm and peace stole over her, and long after the service was ended Amy was still on her knees, thanking God for the comfort He had given her, and praying for His blessing on the work she was about to begin.

At the churchyard gate the clergyman met her, and welcomed her very kindly. He called his sister and bid her shew Amy to her new home. Miss Ellis walked with Amy, and told her of the arrangement they had made for her, which she hoped she would like. The school-house had only one dwelling attached to it, and that had been appropriated to the master, so they had taken two rooms for Amy in a house quite near, where a respectable old widow lived. Her husband had rented a farm, but after his death she gave it up, having enough to live on, and had taken this house, that she might be near the church, and as she expressed it, "have more time to serve the Lord."

Miss Ellis told Amy how very glad they were she was come. The school had been so neglected that it was always in confusion, unless she or Mr. Ellis

were in the room. Had it not been so necessary to have some one immediately to superintend it, they would not have asked her to leave Elverton now, she added. As they reached the little garden gate, they saw old Mrs. Wilson coming to meet them. She had hurried on from church, that she might see the kettle was on, and the fire burning brightly when her visitor came.

Miss Ellis wished Amy good evening at the gate, telling her she knew Mrs. Wilson would take good care of her, and recommending her to go early to bed for she looked sadly tired.

Mrs. Wilson quite verified Miss Ellis's words, and poor Amy's heart felt very grateful for all the kindness she received. She tried to talk, but her thoughts would wander back to the sick room at Elverton, and it was a great relief when Mrs. Wilson, noticing her tired looks, kindly proposed that she should go to bed.

When alone in a strange room, the lonely sensation was again creeping over Amy. But the words she had heard that evening in church sounded in her ears, and she asked herself, whether sitting down to brood over sorrowful thoughts, was running with patience the race set before her. And her conscience, whose dictates Amy had early learnt to obey, urged her to rouse herself, that she might attend to her evening devotions.

How often is the half hour that was intended to be devoted to the service of the Lord, frittered away through negligence or sloth. It has indeed been

wisely said "It is dangerous to delay," one delay seems to give reason for another, and this or that must be done, we think, till the time passes away; and we hurry to our prayers, or rather to place ourselves in a posture for prayer, for the mind that has been occupied with worldly thoughts cannot in a moment fit itself to enter the heavenly courts. And the time is gone. The half hour that might have brought us down strength against temptation, and the peace of God, and nourished the seeds of grace in our souls, is spent. We have nothing of it left, but it is gone to increase the number of those idle hours for which account must one day be rendered to Him who will demand how those lives, purchased for His service at such an immeasurable price, were passed.



CHAPTER III.

"I ask Thee for the daily strength,
To none who ask denied:
And a mind to blend with outward life
Still keeping by Thy side;
Content to fill a little space
So Thou art glorified."

L. Waring.

THOSE whose last waking thought has been the resignation of themselves into the hands of their Heavenly Father, will surely awake with the blessed consciousness that they have been "under the shadow of the Almighty;" and will arise with grateful, cheerful hearts to do His holy will.

Amy had had a calm and peaceful sleep, and awoke much refreshed. She arose early, as was her custom. Her little room was neat and clean. But it was all strange, and her eye longed for some familiar object on which to rest. She opened the window and looked out, but there too all was new and unknown, there was no tree or well-remembered spot on which her heart could dwell. She felt a stranger in a strange land, till the sound that had so cheered her heart the evening before, reminded her again that wherever the Church is there can be no

real loneliness for a Christian, for there is his home, there are his brethren.

The bell was going for morning service, and Amy went down and joined the little band of worshippers in their daily sacrifice of prayer and praise.

She felt glad that her work was to begin at once. She knew that active employment would be the best thing for her, and prevent her from allowing her mind to dwell too much on the past.

Lignwood was a large parish in an agricultural district. The parish had been much neglected in consequence of the ill health of the late vicar, and the school had been left entirely to the charge of the mistress, who though a well-intentioned woman was entirely unfitted for the management of children.

Amy felt almost nervous when she first entered the large room full of children, who were running about, whispering and pushing each other without any idea of order. When they became aware of the presence of their new mistress, they stood still with their eyes fixed upon her. She shook off with a considerable effort the feeling of nervousness, and spoke a few words kindly and cheerfully to the children. Then from a list Miss Ellis had given her she began quietly and quickly to arrange them in classes. It still wanted a few minutes to nine, at which time Mr. Ellis had promised to be there to read prayers, so Amy in a gentle, though very decided tone, told the children to sit down and wait quietly for prayers. They had been so little accus-

tomed to implicit obedience, that they were almost astonished at Amy's decided manner, but there was something in it that made them not venture to disobey. They saw by her expression that she fully expected to be attended to directly, so after a little whispering, which a quiet fixed look from Amy on the offender soon stopped, silence was maintained.

Mr. Ellis felt quite surprised, when he came in, at the difference; and as he saw Amy's composed, thoughtful manner, he felt hopeful that it might work a change.

The state of the school, ever since he had come to the parish, had been a cause of great anxiety to him. He was fully aware what an influence a child's early training has through life on its future welfare, temporal and eternal. And the careless, irreverent reading of the Bible, the wandering eye at prayers, and thoughtless manner of the children, had often made him leave the school, doubting whether any real good would result from instruction, when doing glory to God was not the basis on which the teacher worked.

It was with very different feelings that he left the school this morning after his usual half-hour's catechising. He mentally thanked God that his prayers seemed about to be answered, that the lambs of his flock might be taught "the fear of the Lord," and be trained in the holy, gentle mind that becomes a Christian child.

It is not our intention to follow Amy through the daily routine of her school life. The excellent

training she had herself received, enabled her to get the school quickly in good order. The time-table was well drawn out and strictly attended to. She was always punctual herself, and the children soon found they must be so too. And as she never spoke in school but to give directions in a few words, the children began to learn that their lessons could be done without talking and whispering over them. Outwardly the change was so great that no one going into the school would have believed that they were the same children, who a few weeks before were to be seen in the greatest state of confusion, and whose noise might have been heard as soon as any one drew near the school. And instead of the continual loud voice of the mistress desiring silence, and complaining that she never was attended to, order was observed without any sound of reproof or admonition. Certainly outwardly the change was great. But Amy knew well that it must be long before any great change could take place in the hearts and minds of the children. But she had resolved not to despair, or give way to feelings of disappointment; her only desire was to serve God, and she knew well that it was He alone who could "give the increase;" and if she worked on in faith and patience, ever praying Him to bless her labours, they would not be in vain.

She found great comfort in Mr. Ellis and his sister's kindness; but she could not help often feeling very unhappy, as she thought of her happy home at Elverton, and her dear Mrs. Leslie whom she

should never see again, and it was with great difficulty she could restrain at times a yearning to be with her once more.

Miss Ellis noticed how sad she felt and tried to comfort her. She often asked her to come into the vicarage, and took her into her own little sitting-room, and talked to her, and lent her books. Amy fully appreciated her kindness, and Miss Ellis' presence always seemed to cheer her; but still her thoughts were often at Elverton, and she looked anxiously every day for Mrs. Leslie's promised letter. Mrs. Wilson noticed her look of disappointment on her return from her daily call at the village post-office, where she went as soon as morning school was over. And one day, wishing to save her the hot, hurried walk, she went herself down the hill to the little shop where the post-office was, and to her great joy received the expected letter. She could hardly resist setting off with it at once to the school, but as she knew Amy would never allow anything to interrupt the school hours, she went back to her cottage, and sat waiting till she heard Amy's step coming up the garden.

The grateful look that Amy gave her as she put the treasure into her hands fully repaid her, and she busied herself in the preparations for dinner whilst Amy went into her own room. She shut the door, and sat down with a beating heart, the unopened letter in her hand, and the tears falling fast as her eyes rested on that well-known writing.

It was a long letter, and had evidently been written

at different times, for it was begun the day after Amy had left. The tears flowed faster as she read the kind words, and she was in spirit once more sitting beside Mrs. Leslie's sofa and listening to her voice as she read the following letter.

"My Dear Amy,

"It was but yesterday morning you left us, and yet to me it seems a long time. I miss you much, my dear child, and am often listening for your step at my door, and expecting you to come to me, but I try to repress the selfish feelings that would wish you back again, with the thought that now you have begun your labour for the Lord, and are I trust to be a blessing to many. There was much that I longed to say to you the last night you were with me, dear Amy, but I could not, and now, as I feel able to write, I will begin. I need not tell you that you have my constant prayers, that you may be enabled to work with a single eye for God's service. You will have many trials, dear child; your life has hitherto been in a sheltered home, and it has been ordered for you; now you will be left to yourself, and perhaps you may not have many outward helps. It may be that those with whom you will be thrown will have been differently brought up, they may think your life over strict and particular, and at times you may be tempted to think so yourself; but this is a temptation you must especially guard against. What in our calm hours of reflection we have seen to be right, we must try ever to act upon, and bear in mind that *right* cannot change, and

least of all when we are excited, are we competent to judge of what is right or wrong.

"I know you now feel so anxious to serve God, that it seems as if a change could never come. God grant that it never may. But, alas, we are very weak, and sadly prone to fall, and unless we entirely mistrust ourselves, and trust in God alone, the devil may gain the victory over us. You must keep up a constant watchfulness; guard especially against the least feelings of pride. If you have the comfort of seeing your school improve, and you are praised for the improvement, do not allow any feeling of self-satisfaction to creep over you, but mentally refer all the glory to God, and thank Him if He has blessed your labours.

"I do not think you will feel tempted to go out visiting much, or to form many acquaintances, but in that you must be particularly careful. Indeed, dear Amy, I would almost advise you, for some time, to go nowhere, though you should be asked by your neighbours: for in a strange place you cannot tell the character of those around you, and it is of the greatest importance that you should associate with none but those who are respected and looked up to; and you might make acquaintances that afterwards you would regret, and find difficulty in giving up. Miss Ellis would be able to give you advice on this subject, as she must know every one, and you had better ask her before you make any friends. I feel that I need hardly say any thing on dress, because the resolution you have so wisely made, to dress

always in the simplest and neatest manner, and never to wear any gay colours, will be a great safeguard against a taste that has so many injurious consequences. For if a teacher dresses beyond her station, her warnings against the love of this world and its vanities will have but little force, as they will not be borne out by her example.

"I am writing on all these subjects, my dear Amy, for I think them very important, and I feel as if I should not have strength to write many more letters, and I know that all I have written will have value in your eyes, and be remembered when I have passed away, and can no longer hold visible communion with you. You are young, my child, and temptations must come; you will need to have a resolute intention to serve God, that you may not be taken unawares. But in all, and above all, the great strength is to mistrust ourselves, and trust in God. Without such a deep sense of our own utter weakness as will drive us daily, hourly, to the throne of grace, we shall never be able to persevere in our journey along the narrow road.

"The daily service at Lignwood you will find a great comfort. It will be as daily bread to the soul. Never, as years pass on, be tempted to give up that sacred duty. It is strange, but we often find those who, when the opportunity is first given them of attending daily service, gladly avail themselves of it, and then after a time, as if wearied of the unvarying round of prayer and praise, gradually give it up. But it is this changeless voice that it is

so good for us to hear. When all external things are changing and passing away, this will remind us of Him 'with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' When the bustle of the world and the multitude of occupations would distract the mind, and shut out the thoughts of heaven, here we may come and find 'that peace which the world cannot give.'

"Many indeed are the blessings that the daily morning and evening worship in God's temple brings to the soul; and never should we let the enemy of our souls beguile us by any plausible reasons to give up this blessed privilege. I can speak from experience of its blessedness, dear Amy; in hours of prosperity, when the world seemed bright and the sun always shining, it was a warning voice telling of a far brighter world than this, and to gain which this world must be given up; and in hours of sorrow and sadness it bid the soul remember that 'heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' I trust you may never feel tempted to neglect the daily call to public prayer, but should the temptation come, call to mind, my child, that one of the judgments on Jerusalem was that 'the daily sacrifice should be taken away;' and surely we would not bring that judgment on ourselves.

"There is much more I would wish to say, but I feel that I cannot write any more to-day, and I do not wish to delay any longer sending this letter, which I am afraid you will have been expecting before this. Mr. Leslie has brought me a little

paper to enclose, which he has drawn up for you; he says there is nothing new in it, nothing but what you know well, but you may find it helpful to have it to refer to. He desires me to send you his blessing, and to tell you that he remembers you daily in his prayers. And now, my child, commending you to God's most gracious mercy and protection, I will conclude. May the Lord ever watch over you and guard you from all evil. May He bless your labours, and ever keep you in His love and fear, is the prayer, dear Amy,

of your sincere and attached friend,

ELLEN LESLIE."

A gentle knock at the door roused Amy as she sat with this letter in her hand, her eyes fixed on the beloved name. "I am afraid you will hardly have time to eat your dinner," said Mrs. Wilson's kind voice.

"Dinner! is it dinner time?" Amy asked in surprise.

"Yes, my dear, you have been here more than an hour."

"Have I indeed, dear Mrs. Wilson, I am so sorry to have kept you waiting."

"Oh, never mind that, it is of no consequence, I have no school to go to you know."

Amy rose up directly, and slipping the letter and Mr. Leslie's paper, which she had not time to read, into her pocket, followed Mrs. Wilson out of the room.



CHAPTER IV.

"Think of that day when each brother
To his brother shall be known,
If thy prayers have saved another,
And thy service God shall own;
How well repaid will be thy toils and pain,
If thou shalt meet him there where joys eternal reign."
Baptistery.

It was late that night before Amy could compose herself to sleep. She had gone as usual to her own little room at half-past nine, after their family prayers, but she took out Mrs. Leslie's letter to read it again, and Mr. Leslie's paper of directions, and sat up so long thinking afterwards, that when she did go to bed she could not sleep. She felt very thankful for Mr. Leslie's paper, and trusted to be able to profit by it.

The texts "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," were written at the beginning, and then the following rules.

1. Rise early every morning, so as to secure an hour of perfect quiet for prayer, reading, and meditation, before entering on the duties of the day.

2. Always commend yourself and your children

to God before you enter on the business of the school.

3. Never give any religious instruction without mentally asking God to bless your words and make them sink into the heart.

4. Always secure some little time in the middle of the day for private prayer, and for self-examination; you will find this of the greatest benefit to you, for it will recal the thoughts, and check any feelings of excitement, self-satisfaction, &c.

5. Make a resolution to speak as little as possible about others. Never speak of the faults of your pupils, except to their parents or the clergyman if necessary.

6. Never feel curious to hear of the affairs of others, and especially always try to avoid hearing any evil of others; it is very injurious to the mind to accustom it to hear unnecessarily of evil.

7. Try by every means in your power to inculcate a feeling of reverence for holy things in the minds of the children.

8. Always be punctual, never let any thing interrupt or interfere with the hours of school.

Prayer to be used daily before School.

MOST gracious and eternal God, Father of mercies and God of all comfort, whose providence hath intrusted these children to my care, be Thou their Father and their God. Enable me, O Lord, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and in the fear of God, to the praise of Thy

holy Name. O give me Thy grace and favour, that I may instruct them with diligence and meekness; govern them with prudence and holiness; and lead them in the paths of religion, by example and precepts of holiness. Give them grace to obey their parents, and to live together in love, as children of the same Father. Preserve them from sin and shame. Let Thy mercy lead them safely through the dangers and temptations of their youth. Sanctify them throughout in their bodies, and souls, and spirits, that their thoughts may be pure and holy, and their whole lives such as become the servants of Jesus, that when they have served Thee here, they may be received into the glories of Thy eternal kingdom, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Amy went to sleep with a prayer that she might be enabled to profit by these rules. And when she awoke in the morning the remembrance was fresh in her mind, and she got up with a cheerful, willing heart to her daily duty.

As days passed on, she noticed thankfully that there seemed an improvement in many of the children. There was much less of the rebellious spirit amongst them that she had observed with much anxiety when first she came, they obeyed more readily, and were kinder and more gentle in their manner to one another. But as she had made up her mind not to be elated when her efforts seemed successful, nor depressed if but little way was made,

she worked steadily on, with the one end before her of doing all to the glory of God.

The neighbourhood of Lignwood was very beautiful, narrow valleys with little wild streams dashing through them, and hills covered with furze and brushwood. Amy found a walk in the long summer evenings most refreshing after school was over. Mrs. Wilson sometimes went with her, but she was never happier than when alone, especially when, as was often the case, the object of her walk was to visit some one sick or poor, whom Miss Ellis had asked her to call and see, to be the bearer of some little comfort or necessary they required; except where these errands took her she adhered to Mrs. Leslie's advice and visited no one.

One evening on her return from her walk, Mrs. Wilson told her that a friend had called during her absence.

"Who can it be?" was Amy's exclamation; "I know no one here."

"I cannot help you," Mrs. Wilson answered, "for she would not leave her name, she said she should call again on Thursday, and it would be such a surprise to you she would rather not say who she was."

"What was she like?"

"Why she was rather taller than you, and dressed smarter, though to my mind I cannot say she looked nearly as neat and nice, and had dark hair I think."

This rather indefinite description did not help Amy much, and she went into her own room to

take off her things, whilst Mrs. Wilson and her little maid put supper ready.

The thought of who her friend could be sometimes crossed Amy's mind, but she was too much occupied to have time for idle thoughts. Thursday was a Saint's day and a half holiday, and as Amy and Mrs. Wilson were sitting together after dinner, Amy reading aloud an interesting book Miss Ellis had lent her whilst Mrs. Wilson worked, she was interrupted by the latter exclaiming. "Well, there she is to be sure." "Who?" Amy asked, for in the interest of the book she had forgotten her friend's promised visit. "Why your friend, don't you see?" and on looking up the garden Amy at once recognised Jane Morris, one of her companions at the training college, and ran out to meet her, saying, "Why, Jane, who would have thought of meeting you here!"

"Why, Amy, who would have thought of meeting you here!" was the answer, accompanied with a merry laugh and a kiss. "I am so very glad to see you," both exclaimed, and arm in arm they walked into the cottage.

Kind Mrs. Wilson looked very pleased to see her young friend so happy, and thoughtfully making an excuse to go out on some errand, she left them to themselves.

They were soon in earnest conversation, for both had much to ask and much to hear. Jane's merry eyes filled with tears when Amy told her of her dear Mrs. Leslie's illness. "And oh, Jane, she is my

dearest, kindest friend," Amy went on; for her sorrow, which she usually kept to herself, seemed to burst forth when once opened; "I feel so lonely when I think she will be taken, for I have none who love me as she does. I know it is wrong, and I try to leave it all in God's hands and be resigned whatever He appoints, but sometimes I find it very difficult."

"I am so sorry for you, dear Amy, I know how you were always thinking about her when we were at the school together; it does seem very hard you should have to lose her, and she so young and good too."

"Oh, don't call it hard please, Jane," said poor Amy through her tears, "it sounds like murmuring, and I would not murmur for a moment at what God sends."

"Well I won't, dear, if it distresses you; I remember how particular you always were about words, and I used to say it couldn't matter: but you were right I know, though I pretended not to think so. But now you must tell me something about your school," for Jane saw the subject was too painful for Amy to continue it.

"I have not much to tell, Jane; you know I have only been here about six weeks."

"Well, but is it getting on well, and have you many children, and do many people come to see it?"

"I hope it is getting on well, there are about fifty children on the books, and nearly that number attend."

"There is the last part of my question you have not answered, Amy; do many people come to see it?"

"Mr. Ellis comes regularly every morning, and Miss Ellis very often too."

"Oh, but that is not exactly what I meant; do they bring people to see it?"

"No, very seldom; if they have friends with them one will come in sometimes, but Mr. Ellis does not think it a good plan."

"I wonder why not: I think it is so encouraging for the mistress and children, and it makes them so anxious to get on."

"Does it?" said Amy, rather thoughtfully.

"Now, I know by your voice Amy, you don't agree with me, though you won't say so."

"I was only thinking, Jane, that perhaps it is not a good thing for the children to have the visits of strangers made a stimulus for exertion."

"Oh, some of your old-fashioned notions, dear, as I always called them; but go on, I like to hear what you have to say. Why is it bad for the children?"

"You know, Jane, I only tell you what I think, and it seems to me," and Amy spoke very gravely, but very gently, "that we cannot be working for the glory of God when we want those excitements to make us take pains in doing our duty."

Jane coloured a little as Amy said this. "You are right no doubt, Amy, but you know I am not as good as you, and never was, so we won't say any more;—let me go and see your school-room."

Amy felt pained by Jane's words, she very much

disliked being called good, but she did not like to say any thing more. She felt that she and Jane did not think in the same way on their office.

They went to the school-room, and in the interest of looking over the maps and books, and comparing their different time-tables and arrangements, the time passed, till Mrs. Wilson came to look for them, to tell them tea was quite ready.

Amy walked some part of the way home with Jane; they found a shorter way across the fields, by which they were only four miles from each other. Jane begged Amy the first holiday she had to come and see her. "It cannot be Saturday, for I have promised to go and help Miss Ellis to varnish some maps, but I will come as soon as I can," said Amy in answer to Jane's entreaties, and with much pleasure at the thoughts of so soon seeing Amy again, Jane walked merrily home.



CHAPTER V.

"When with dear friends sweet talk I hold,
And all the flowers of life unfold;—
Let not my heart within me burn,
Except in all I Thee discern."

Christian Year.

THE meeting with Jane Morris was a great pleasure to Amy, for she had lived so much alone since she came to Lignwood, at least with no society of those of her own age, that it was pleasant to talk again over past days. But as she walked quietly home across the fields, in the calm stillness of the summer evening, rather melancholy and half troubled thoughts oppressed her.

The duty of self-examination had been so early inculcated on her, that habitually after any conversation she reflected whether she had borne in mind the rules given on the regulation of the tongue. In the talk she had had with Jane there did not at first sight appear anything really wrong, and still the remembrance of it did not give Amy satisfaction. Jane had been very amusing, and told many anecdotes of the people in her neighbourhood. There had been nothing ill-natured in them, or Amy could

not have listened with any pleasure, but as she thought over it, how unprofitable it all appeared, and she felt that her mind was excited, and not in the calm, even state it had been in lately, which had made poor Amy feel happy in the midst of her sorrow and anxiety. She knew this might partly be ascribed to the fact that after living a very quiet regular life for any length of time, any change is more apt to excite and distract the mind, but she asked herself, "Surely it need not be that friends cannot meet and talk without feeling their hearts are in a degree drawn away from God," for such her conscience told her was now the case. But she remembered what Mr. Leslie had once told her, that when she felt she had done wrong, she should not spend the time in fruitless regrets, which often really proceed from mortified self-love, but turn at once to God, and ask His forgiveness and grace to do better in future, and then with His aid see what had caused the fall, and try, trusting in Him, to avoid such temptations. As Amy acted on this, she felt soothed and calmed, and she began humbly and patiently to think how she could do better. "I never asked God's blessing on our meeting," was her first self-condemnation; "that must be the one great cause that it all seems so profitless now it is over." As she reflected further on this, she thought what a blessing it would be, if when friends met they habitually commended themselves to God, and prayed for His blessing on their interview. "Jane would think me very strange if I were to propose

it," she thought, "but at any rate I ought to try to do it myself, and perhaps in time we may get to talk more profitably." Her meditation was interrupted by the appearance of good Mrs. Wilson, who beginning to get rather uneasy at her prolonged absence, had set out to meet her.

"It is such a lovely evening, Mrs. Wilson, I was tempted to go on further than I intended," said Amy, in answer to the kind expostulations with her on the risk of taking cold by being out so late; "but indeed with your rheumatism you ought not to have come so kindly to see after me," she added.

"Oh, it won't hurt me, my dear," Mrs. Wilson said; "I have quite enjoyed the walk, and I have been thinking over that pretty evening hymn you sometimes say to me; I wish you would say it now, for the one verse beginning,

'Abide with me from morn till eve,'

is the only one I have perfect."

Amy gladly complied, it seemed in unison with her thoughts, and she repeated gently and with much feeling the beautiful evening hymn from the "Christian Year." She had often read it to Mrs. Leslie as she lay on her sofa, and now her heart was with her, and earnestly she prayed, "Watch by the sick," as she repeated the words.

"Well, it is a beautiful hymn, certainly," said Mrs. Wilson; "I should never get tired of hearing it, it is so soothing; I must learn it off by heart, that I may say it to myself when I lie awake at night."

"I have it, as well as the morning hymn, on a large sheet of paper for fastening to the wall; will you let me put up one in your room?" Amy asked. "I should so like to do it, for I have several of them; Mr. Leslie gave me them."

"Indeed, I should like it very much; thank you my dear, for thinking of it, then I shall soon learn it; and now that we are at home I suppose we must go in, though it is so pleasant I should like to take another turn."

"Just as you like—I am not at all tired."

They walked for a few minutes, and Amy talked so cheerfully; Mrs. Wilson little knew how sad she had felt as her thoughts but a few instants before had taken her again to Elverton, and brought her dear Mrs. Leslie to her mind. But Amy always tried to think of others before herself, and this made her such a pleasant companion. Mrs. Wilson, who had rather dreaded the idea of a young companion, often now thanked God for the comfort He had sent her in Amy.

When Amy found herself alone in her own room that night, she renewed the subject that she had been thinking of in her walk, and prayed that being with others might not lead to distraction of mind, and that her future intercourse with her friend might prove a blessing to them both.

In after days that night's thoughts and prayers often came to her mind, and she could feel that her prayer had not been unanswered.

Saturday afternoon came, and Amy went ac-

cording to appointment to Miss Ellis. She always felt glad to go to the vicarage, and Miss Ellis's kind manner made her feel quite at home with her. They were soon busily engaged in varnishing the maps.

"You will find them very useful," Miss Ellis remarked.

"Yes, indeed, ma'am, I shall; it is strange how much more interest the children have taken in the history of the Israelites, since Mr. Ellis was so good as to bring in the map of their journey through the wilderness. They seem to understand now that they were real places they went to."

"I remember well when I was a child," Miss Ellis said, "till my dear father traced out for me all St. Paul's travels, I never used to consider that the Athens and Rome and other places he went to were the same places that I was reading of in ancient and modern history; and I think we cannot be too particular in making children realize that the Bible is the history of human beings like ourselves; for when we remember that they were 'men of like passions with' us, then we apply with more force the instructions and exhortations given for the subjugation of those passions."

"Mr. Leslie always thought, too, it was necessary for children to have some knowledge of the customs of those nations the Bible speaks of, before they could understand many parts of it."

"That is very true, I dare say you know two little books published by the Christian Knowledge Society,

called, 'Palestine,' and 'Holy Sites of the Land of Promise.'"

"Yes, ma'am, I have them, Mrs. Wilson is reading them now, and is so much pleased with them; she says they tell her many things she meant to ask Mr. Ellis the meaning of."

"I suppose you and Mrs. Wilson have many pleasant talks together."

"Yes, ma'am, and Mrs. Wilson is so fond of being read to, that when I am going to read she generally asks me to read aloud."

"That must be very pleasant, but I hardly think it can be good for you after teaching so many hours in the school."

"Oh, it does not tire me, Mrs. Wilson always makes me stop if I get at all hoarse, and it is such a pleasure to be of use to her, she is so kind."

"I am so glad she is, I felt sure she would be: you must indeed have needed kindness, coming to a strange place, and leaving such dear friends. Have you any friends at all in this neighbourhood?"

Amy told of Jane Morris's visit, and her intention to go and see her as soon as she could.

"I am afraid I prevented your going to-day," Miss Ellis said; "why did you not tell me?"

"Thank you, ma'am, I would much rather have come here," Amy answered.

"Then you must stay and take tea with me, for I shall be all alone till church time; Mr. Ellis is gone over to Exford to see a poor man from this parish who is dangerously ill in the infirmary."

Amy willingly agreed to this proposal, having first begged Miss Ellis to let her run home and tell Mrs. Wilson not to wait for her.

They had a very pleasant evening. Miss Ellis played some beautiful sacred music, to which Amy listened with great delight; then they sang together, and afterwards she shewed Amy some prints; the time passed so quickly, they were quite surprised when the bell began for evening service, which was now at half-past eight; the men worked so late in the fields they could not get home before, and some few did avail themselves of the privilege of closing the day by joining in the Church's service of prayer and praise.

After church Miss Ellis wished Amy good night and went with her brother to the vicarage, while Amy and Mrs. Wilson walked home together.

Amy could not help noticing how different her feelings were after this evening passed with Miss Ellis, to what they were when Jane Morris left her. She asked herself what made the difference, and at first could give no answer. But then she thought that all the conversation with Miss Ellis had been more profitable than otherwise; they had not talked over people, and there had been nothing exciting in it, nothing to which the sound of the church bell calling to prayer had seemed any interruption. And it is a good test, when our intercourse with others disposes us, or at least is no hindrance, to devotion. Alas! how few of the many conversations we hold would stand that test. How often do we feel dis-

inclined for calm recollection after a "pleasant talk;" and how often is the solitude of our own chamber and of our own heart irksome to us. "These things ought not so to be." Would they be so if "our conversation were in heaven?"

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh! might we all our lineage prove,
Give and forgive, do good and love,
By soft endearments in kind strife
Lightening the load of daily life!"
Christian Year

One morning, about a fortnight after the evening mentioned in the last chapter, as Amy was in the school-room before morning school, seeing, as she always did, that every thing was ready and arranged for beginning the day's work, she heard unusually loud voices in the play-ground. As the noise increased she went to the window, and was much disturbed at seeing the angry faces of two of the elder girls, who seemed to be disputing violently; the others were looking on, and some seemed trying to quiet the disputants.

Amy went at once into the play-ground. As she appeared many little voices exclaimed, "Hush, stop, there's governess!" but they were too eager to notice, and Amy heard Ann Smith saying to Jane Tomkins, "It's very wrong of you to tell such stories, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, I'll tell governess."

"It's no story, it's quite true, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself," was the angry reply.

"Oh, stop, children, be quiet directly," Amy said with her firm, gentle tone, "and follow me into the school-room."

They stopped, but angry murmurs were heard as they followed Amy, till she turned round and desired that not a word should be spoken.

When they came into the room she shut the door and said, "Now, I do not know, girls, what you have been quarrelling about, but I can tell you at once, you are both in fault; for however much you may have been annoyed, surely, the angry, bitter words I heard were not such as should ever be said by one Christian to another."

"Oh, ma'am, Jane has been so unkind," began Ann, sobbing as she spoke.

"Stop, Ann. If she has been unkind, could you not bear more patiently with unkindness. But before I hear any thing, I beg you to ask God to calm your angry passions, and then you will be able to speak more charitably of each other." Amy's voice was so sad and so earnest, that it seemed in some degree to calm them and recal better thoughts.

After a few moments' pause, she said, "Now, Jane, tell me truly in what way you have been unkind to Ann: remember whose Eye is on you. And Ann, do not speak a word till I tell you."

"Please, ma'am, I only said what was true. Yesterday when you set us such a difficult sum, and we could none of us do it except Ann, I know it

was because she looked at your book, that was open on the table; I saw her go to the table and look."

Poor Ann had great trouble in refraining from speaking, but a look from Amy reminded her.

"How do you know she looked, Jane?" Amy asked; "her back was towards you."

"Yes, ma'am, but I saw her move something that was on the book."

Amy turned to Ann, and said, "Ann, I entreat you to tell me the whole truth; if you were as deceitful as Jane says you were, pray do not add to the sin by telling an untruth, think what you are going to say."

"Indeed, ma'am, I did not do it," said Ann, still sobbing; "I am sure I didn't, I wouldn't have done it for anything."

"I trust you would not indeed, Ann," said Amy; "all you have learnt would be of little use, if you could act so deceitfully; but why then did you uncover the book, as Jane says you did?"

"I only went to reach my pencil, ma'am; I had handed it to you to alter a figure on one of the little one's slates; please, ma'am, not to believe I could do such a thing."

There was something so perfectly open in Ann's expression as she spoke, that Amy felt no doubt of the truth of her words. "I believe all you have said," she answered; "and, Jane, I think you were very wrong in giving way to suspicious thoughts; had Ann done as you thought, it was not kind to

tell her of it before the whole school; if you wished to do her good you should have spoken to her when you were alone, and then you would have been able to hear the truth; as it was, you became so angry you could listen to nothing. And, Ann, I wish you could have remembered, when you felt indignant at being falsely accused, who it was, who when 'reviled, reviled not again.' These little trials must come, and if borne properly will be great blessings to us. But now prove that you neither feel any anger by being kind to each other."

Ann directly held out her hand to Jane, trying to smile through her tears; Jane took it very coldly, and looked cross and sulky. Amy saw this with pain, and sending Ann into the class-room to dust the books, she said, "Jane, are you not glad to find that Ann has not done wrong? I am sure you must believe her?"

Jane did not know what to answer, she felt very cross, she hardly knew why, for she could not doubt Ann's words.

Amy took her hand, and said, "My dear child, think who it is who is putting this evil spirit into your heart. Oh, resist him, do not yield, do not let him get the better of you, you will find it harder and harder to overcome evil, if you make no effort when tempted."

Jane tried to turn away her face as if she would not hear, but Amy was too much in earnest to give up, and she said very sadly, "Oh, Jane, remember who we grieve when we sin."

Jane's heart was softened, and tears filled her eyes. "I am very sorry," she said.

"I am so thankful to hear you say so," Amy answered; "shall I pray with you that you may have strength to overcome your temper?"

Jane knelt thankfully and joined earnestly in the prayer for humility and meekness which Amy said. When they rose, she said, "I should like to go and ask Ann's pardon."

"Do go, my dear child," Amy replied, "and may God bless you:" and in her heart she thanked God as she heard the kind words they said to each other.

She little thought how much her gentle, patient manner told on the children; and how often her example would rise up and stop the angry word that was half uttered, when a young brother or sister gave much trouble at home. It has indeed been most truly said, "we should do more for others in correcting ourselves, than in wishing to correct them." It was quite a puzzle to many mothers whose only idea of keeping children in order was loud constant scolding, how the quiet, gentle mistress had gained such authority, for she never seemed to scold, and yet the children were so afraid of disobeying her they would rather go away with half a breakfast than be too late for school; and would sit out before the door with a book preparing a lesson for the next day, instead of playing, if there was any fear of the task not being learnt in right time.

Had they asked Amy the secret of her good management perhaps she would have been puzzled what answer to give; for she thought far too humbly of herself to have any idea that it was in great measure the influence of her consistent example. The one ruling motive of her life, to "do all to the glory of God," made her at all times so scrupulously attentive to her duty, that every rule was observed, the strictest punctuality maintained, and her whole thoughts and attention given to whatever she had to do. This soon told on the children; they found the rules must be attended to; they must be punctual, since their governess was always in school before them. Her energy and earnestness in teaching gave an interest to all their lessons, and her uniform kindness and strict justice won the love and respect of all.

But we will return to the school. At the first sound of the church clock striking nine, the school-bell ceased; before it had finished Mr. Ellis walked into the room. The children were arranged for prayers, they did not stand in their classes for prayers, but were divided into two bands, one standing on either side the room, like a choir in a church. Mr. Ellis thought this change of posture helped to make them feel that they were engaged in something very different from a lesson; and the very moving from their places roused their attention. After prayers, they read or chanted the Psalms, each side repeating a verse. They then quietly moved to their places, and the business of the school began.

Mr. or Miss Ellis were always there for the first hour or half hour, which enabled two of the classes to commence with religious instruction. Mr. Ellis had his class in the class-room, and most profitable were his catechisings. The children were always so happy whose turn it was to go to Mr. Ellis. These lessons were now a pleasure to him, too; formerly they used to make him feel very uneasy, and often unhappy, for he felt how impossible it was in one half hour to undo the work of the rest of the day. For the religious instruction was then a lesson to itself, and not the teaching that was to influence the conduct through the day, and be carried out in all the duties of the school. But now it was very different, and he felt that what he said to the children would not be dissipated by irreverence and carelessness as soon as they had left him, but that the one aim of their teacher would be to make that religious instruction the basis on which she worked, and its influence be felt in all the actions of the day.

The school hours passed quickly and happily away, and it was astonishing how quietly they changed from one lesson to another. No one moved but the head girl of each class, whose place it was to give out and receive books, slates, and whatever else was used; and, as we said before, Amy was always in the school-room before school began, to see that everything was ready; so there was no waiting for copies to be set, or sums to be given, but one lesson succeeded another directly; everything too was always put in its right place, and when the children left the room

at twelve o'clock, after singing a hymn, and went home to dinner, or to play in the play-ground, the room was just as neat as when they came into it in the morning. The windows were all thrown open, and the school-room fresh and well aired for the afternoon.

Now, it must not be supposed that all this punctuality and order came naturally to Amy; it was the result of continual efforts and earnest prayer. Like others, she felt at times tempted to linger over the interesting book she was reading, or finish the pleasant conversation she and Mrs. Wilson were having, when the school-bell rang. But she had been taught that obedience is one of the great lessons of life, a lesson which none, the highest or lowest, must think himself excused from, if he would attain unto holiness. The duties of our calling will generally give occasion for its exercise, and those who have no definite rule laid down for them, must make to themselves rules and be most strictly obedient to them. Punctuality, observed as a religious training, will be a great help to them, for to delay doing things at the proper time is really, though so little thought of, a great fault. For does not procrastination almost always arise from sloth and self-indulgence, and giving way to it gives strength to both those evil passions. Besides, what right have we to reckon, that if we put off doing the work in its appointed hour, time will ever be given us to do it in? Each hour brings its own duty, which, if neglected or delayed, must of necessity encroach on

the time that should be given to other work. And so we go on, ever purposing, but never fulfilling; ever feeling much has been left undone that should have been done; ever hurrying, as it were, after time which is stealing away from us. Alas! alas! if the night overtake us, with but half our work done, and no time then to finish it!



CHAPTER VII.

"I saw one from whose heart
The silver chord was riven,
And what if earth its links should part,
They were knit fast in Heaven."

DAYS and weeks passed quietly away of Amy's calm and happy life. For it was happy, though sad and anxious thoughts would at times arise, as Elverton and all its loved inhabitants and associations came to her mind. But she tried to still them all and rest on God, casting all her care on Him, and His peace filled her soul. Must she not then have been happy? Oh, how far happier than those who, having their cup full of this world's joys, yet lack this one thing needful, this which alone can satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul.

She heard often of Mrs. Leslie. Sometimes Mr. Leslie wrote a few kind words; sometimes at her mistress's desire, Wood wrote; and occasionally Mrs. Leslie would add a few words at the end of the letter. How precious those few words were, though the tears would fall as Amy read them, and marked the trembling hand with which they were written.

She had had but one whole letter from Mrs. Leslie since she left. Often in the few words she wrote, she said she would write again fully if she had strength, but the strength never came. She was gradually getting weaker, though so gradually, that those who watched beside her day by day, hardly noticed the decline, and she was always so happy and so free from depression, that at times hope would yet arise, that they might still keep her to cheer and bless their hearts.

She knew it would not be so, and always spoke of her departure as near, for she felt it would be a still heavier trial to her dear husband to part with her, had she allowed him to buoy himself up with hope.

In the last letter Amy had from Elverton, Mrs. Leslie had added these words: "God bless you, my Amy, I have much to say, but I cannot say it now; and yet why should I say *much*, a few words will say it all, love God with your *whole* heart, do all to His glory. Watch and pray. Pray for me too, dear child, I feel the passage through the valley of death is near, but 'I fear no evil.' God will uphold me through it. May we meet at the feet of Jesus."

As Amy read these words she felt that they were the last she should receive from her beloved friend. She read them again and again. She knelt and prayed over them, for her friend and herself, that she might have strength to submit with entire resignation to this coming sorrow, and that her beloved Mrs. Leslie might indeed find her God a very present help in trouble, and feel the everlasting arms

beneath her, and that they might hereafter meet in Paradise. Strengthened by prayer, she felt calm, and able to return to her duties.

About a week after Amy had received this letter, Miss Ellis came to Mrs. Wilson's after morning school; she looked very grave, and after speaking a few words, asked for Amy. Mrs. Wilson said she expected her home directly, and put a chair for Miss Ellis to sit down. In a few minutes she came in, her first words, before she noticed Miss Ellis being there, were, "Any letter for me?" Miss Ellis's heart sank within her, for she had sad news for poor Amy, she hardly knew how to break it to her. "I want to speak a few words to you," she said, "can we go into your room? I have a letter for you," she continued, with a trembling voice, when they were in Amy's room, "but, oh, I am afraid to tell you what it contains."

There was no need to tell, Amy knew it all, she felt what it must be, she could not say a word, she only stretched out her hand convulsively for the letter. Miss Ellis spoke most gently and tenderly to her, like a kind sister, and then feeling she must long to be alone, she left her and went to Mrs. Wilson, to save Amy having to tell her sad grief. Mrs. Wilson was full of sorrow, she felt acutely for her young friend.

The letter announcing the mournful tidings of Mrs. Leslie's death, had been thoughtfully enclosed in one to Miss Ellis, that she might prepare Amy for it; but she was prepared, she had schooled her

heart to bear it. And when Miss Ellis left her, her first, almost unconscious action, was to throw herself on her knees and pray for strength.

The letter was from Mr. Leslie's sister, who had been with them the last fortnight, (Mrs. Leslie's mother was ill and unable to come,) it told of the calm and happy death of a Christian.

She was perfectly sensible to the last, and had looked happier than ever the whole of the day; she could speak but little, but whenever spoken to, she gave such a bright smile, unearthly in its brightness. She had received the Holy Communion a few hours before her death, and Mr. Leslie knelt beside her to the last, praying, at times aloud, in short deep petitions, as he thought her strength would bear it, and then inwardly. She lay so still and calm with her eyes closed, that he thought she slept, and paused in his prayers, but she opened her eyes and said with a bright smile, in the faintest tone, "Peace—peace, all peace and joy." Once again afterwards her lips moved. Mr. Leslie leant over her to catch the least sound, she did not see or notice him, but he heard her gently whisper, "I come Lord Jesus, it is Thou, I am not afraid." And as she said it, she clasped her hands with unnatural strength and bowed her head,—and the spirit had returned to God who gave it. Miss Leslie said, her brother had been most mercifully supported, though she almost feared his health would give way. Mrs. Leslie had often mentioned Amy, she expressed a wish to see her once again before

she died, but then added, "it is all well as it is, and through God's mercy we shall soon all meet again."

When Amy had read the letter that told of this blessed end, she felt as if she ought to thank God that He had taken one, whom He had prepared to go, out of the miseries of this sinful world. And for the blessed dead she could indeed praise God. But for herself, she was an orphan, she had lost a tender mother, and had felt lonely and desolate—God sent a warm and loving heart to cheer her, she was no longer desolate—mother, sister, friend, protector, all seemed given—but now He who had given all saw good to take all away, she felt again an orphan, lonely and desolate; and at first natural grief overcame all other feelings, and sitting on the floor, her face buried in the bed, she wept till her whole frame trembled with emotion, and she could think of nothing, understood nothing, but that Mrs. Leslie was dead. Her dearest friend, her beloved guardian and mistress, was taken from her, and she was alone in the world.

She sat still in her overwhelming sorrow, unconscious how time passed, till the words seemed to sound in her ear, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The words seemed so clearly spoken, that she started and turned round to see who said them, but she saw no one; yet was she not alone, the Holy Spirit was pleading with her, and in another moment she was on her knees, praying for forgiveness for what now seemed almost murmuring, and earnestly

striving to bend her will to God's; she did not strive in vain, her wild grief was subdued, and she could say from her heart, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

We will not follow her through these hours of sorrow. Miss Ellis and Mrs. Wilson were most kind, and did all in their power to comfort her. Miss Ellis insisted on her staying at home for a few days, and took the school for her. Mr. Ellis often called in to see her, and spoke so kindly and so beautifully on the duty of resignation, and the blessedness of those who "sleep in Jesus," that she felt greatly comforted, and the day succeeding that of her dear Mrs. Leslie's funeral, she assured Miss Ellis, with many thanks for her kindness, that she was quite able to return to the school.

The children were so pleased to see her back; they looked kindly and compassionately on her pale face and black dress, and seemed to try to give as little trouble as possible.

Amy felt that it was much better for her to be employed, and now that the one who had given to her world its charm was gone, she prayed that her heart and affections might be more entirely fixed on God alone, and her whole time and energy devoted to His service.

After school she often walked to see a poor sick woman who lived in a lonely part of the parish, and whom Mr. Ellis had asked her to visit. She could not read, but Mr. Ellis used to leave books for Amy to read to her. The poor sufferer looked forward

to these visits as bright spots in her lonely life, and would listen with joy and thankfulness to the words of comfort Amy read, and wonder how quickly the hour passed. She often lamented that she could not read, and would say, "Many an hour would pass happily and profitably if I could spend it on a book."

Amy often thought whether it would be possible to teach her to read, but feared it would be hopeless to attempt it. One day as she was leaving the cottage, having stayed as long as she could, the poor woman said, looking at the book as Amy put it down, "there it must stay, and I longing to know more of it; I often think I am like one parched with thirst, close to a well, but with nothing to draw the water in."

Amy hesitated no longer. "Would you like to try to learn to read?" she said. "I would gladly do my best to teach you, and if we asked God to bless our efforts, I think we should succeed in time."

"Do you indeed think so?" she asked most eagerly: "oh, how thankful I should be; thank you many times for offering, I could read a little once, and perhaps it will come back again. I should so like to try, when shall we begin?"

"I will try to come again to-morrow evening, and we will not forget to ask for God's blessing before we begin."

"No, indeed, He gave sight to the blind, and will it not be giving light to my poor eyes if they can learn to read His blessed word."

Amy and her poor friend shook hands warmly

and parted; as she walked home she felt very thankful that a new way of usefulness seemed opening to her.

It was a beautiful walk from Mary Carter's cottage (that was the name of Amy's friend) to the school; and Amy stopped, as she often did, at one particular spot, where there was a lovely view. On a hill just opposite stood the church and school, and a few other houses clustering round, as if to shelter under the church's shade; they were half hidden by the old elm trees that grew round the vicarage garden; on either side of this conical-shaped hill a distant view of the surrounding country might be seen. The sun was now sinking, and over all there seemed to rest that solemn stillness, so peculiar to a summer or early autumn evening, when the noise and heat of the day is over, and all things animate and inanimate appear to be at rest.

It was so lovely that Amy still lingered, though the fast disappearing sun, and the chill air that was playing round, warned that a September evening will not allow of lengthened musings. But Amy, quite unconscious of the warning, might have enjoyed the beautiful view as long as daylight lasted, had not a step behind roused her, and soon Mr. Ellis' kind voice said, "It is almost too late to be standing still out of doors, though I do not wonder that view should detain you, I always find myself lingering there. You have been paying Mary Carter a visit I dare say."

Amy told of her visit, and of poor Mary's wish to

learn to read. Mr. Ellis was much pleased to find Amy intended trying to teach her. "You will, indeed, be doing an act of kindness," he said; "and if you succeed, which I cannot but think you will, you will have conferred a benefit on her as long as she lives." As he spoke, the first sound of the church bell reached them, so wishing Amy good evening, he said he must hurry on, but he turned back saying, "I was forgetting a message I had from my sister; she told me if I saw you this evening, to ask you to come and take tea with her to-morrow; she wants to talk over with you a plan we are very much interested in now, of having an evening school for the elder girls." Amy begged him to thank Miss Ellis and say she should be very much pleased to come.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene,—one step enough for me."

Lyra Apostolica.

Amy did not forget her promise to poor Mary Carter, and though she knew she should have to hurry very much to get to her cottage after school, and return home in time to prepare for going to the vicarage before evening service, she would not disappoint her. So telling Mrs. Wilson she should not be home till a quarter after six, she hurried away as soon as her little troop was dispersed, and the schoolroom door locked, and walked as fast as she could to Furze-bank, which was the name of the hill where Mary Carter's cottage stood.

She got there in little more than a quarter of an hour, but so tired with her quick walk, that she was obliged to sit down and rest before she could begin her lesson.

"How kind of you to come," began Mary; "you have been busy all day at the school, and must want

rest, and now you come hurrying up this steep hill to see a poor creature who I'm sure has nothing to entertain you with when you come."

"Oh, don't say that, Mary," Amy answered with a pleasant smile, "I am looking forward with pleasure to our lessons, but will you give me a glass of water before we begin, for I am quite hot and tired."

Mary was delighted to comply with this request, and Amy sat down to rest, untying her bonnet; and whilst they are waiting to begin their lesson, we will give a little sketch of Mary Carter's history. She had told it to Amy at different times and interested her much, for she had seen "many ups and downs," as she used to say of herself, "but the Lord's hand could be seen in them all."

Mary was born in a village in the north of England, she never remembered her father. He was a soldier, and soon after he had prevailed on Alice May to leave her happy home, and become his wife, his regiment was ordered abroad. Alice's father, who had most unwillingly consented to his only child, the darling and joy of his heart, becoming a soldier's wife, insisted beforehand that Henry Cooper should never take her out of England.

It was kindly meant, for the old man could not bear to think of his sweet, merry little Alice, who was still almost a child, having to endure all the miseries and hardships of a soldier's wife on foreign service. But when the hour of parting came, and he saw the anguish that rent his child's heart, he

almost repented. He tried in vain to cheer her, and he trusted to the treasure that would soon be hers, to do what he could not. And when the young mother pressed her first-born to her heart, and tried to trace in its tiny features some resemblance to the father, whose image was never absent from her mind, she did feel a sensation nearer approaching to happiness, than any that had visited her poor heart, since her husband had been taken from her.

The little Mary was now, what poor Alice had once been, the sunbeam in the house. Her kind old grandfather was never weary of carrying her out and talking to her. And as she grew older and could begin to talk to him and run by his side, they would wander out together and sit down under some favourite tree, whilst his old and trembling hands were employed in twining wreaths, or making daisy chains to please his darling.

Five years passed away, poor Alice had become more reconciled to her grief, but all the joy of youth was gone, and had her husband returned he would hardly have recognised in her pale, care-worn face, the light-hearted joyous girl of eighteen, whose love had been plighted to him a few short years before.

But now sad news reached their little home, and Alice's cheek grew paler, and her heart more anxious, as one after another of the visitors to the little farm on the hill, told old Master May of the dreadful battles that were being fought, and the

many lives that were lost. She said nothing, but the work would drop from her hand, and her eyes would fix so earnestly and so sadly on the speaker's face, that her poor father would get up in haste, call his visitor to the door, and beg him to say no more, for it would break his child's heart.

These were sad and anxious days. Little Mary used to wonder what made "dear mother's face so white," and why grandfather would say, "not now, darling," when she asked him to come and play.

One hot sultry evening, when old May had persuaded his daughter to leave her work, and come and sit out in the garden, they were startled by a stranger coming up to them. "Is this Master May's house?" he asked, and on being answered,

"I promised," he continued, "to give this parcel into his hands;" and then looking at Alice, he said in a whisper, shaking his head, "sad news, sad news!"

May hardly knew how to compose himself, but almost mechanically, from his usual benevolent habit, he asked the stranger to come in and rest and take some refreshment. He thanked him but refused decidedly, saying he had ten miles further to go that night. And looking once again, with a sad and pitying expression, at Alice, and little Mary, who had crept close to her mother at the sight of the stranger, he wished them good evening and went on his way.

May knew what he was to expect before he opened the parcel, and he shrunk from the fearful

task that was his, for that his child was a widow he knew, and to tell her so seemed more than he had power to do. But Alice had heard all, and before he knew what she was doing, she had sprung from her seat, seized the parcel, torn it open, and grasping the letter that was within, read its fearful contents. She seemed to have collected all her strength for this, for she read every word, holding her breath, and growing paler and paler. But when she had finished, she pressed her hands wildly on her head, gave an agonizing shriek and fell fainting on the ground.

Mary never forgot that evening; fifty years and more had passed, but still that scene in its minutest particulars was as firmly impressed on her mind as if it had happened but yesterday.

May lifted his poor child from the ground, carried her up to her room, and laid her on the bed, and all night he watched beside her. Little Mary crept up after him, and laid down by her mother sobbing herself to sleep.

For many days no dawn of reason returned, at times she went over all that the letter told, and thought herself on the battle-field and shrieked for aid; and then again her husband would be returned, and they be wandering together in the quiet woods of her home. Her poor father used to sit beside her, the tears rolling down his cheeks, and almost at times wishing this blessed delusion might last, and she might never awake to know her real state.

But the fever was at length subdued, and after

long weeks of anxious watching, poor May had the comfort of hearing his dear child speak once more to him in her own sweet gentle voice. She was very weak, so weak he used to carry her up and down stairs as he had done more than twenty years ago. She strove hard to be patient and resigned, and tried not to long to die; that was the most difficult part of all, life seemed so very dreary, to have lost all its interest. But for her father and her child's sake she tried to be happy, and once again went about her home occupations.

As winter came on, a short cough began; she always said it was of no consequence, but still it did not leave her, and her father grew anxious and took her to the doctor. He gave her medicine, but told her father medicine would do little good. It was consumption brought on by grief. Still she went on uncomplaining, trying to smile and look cheerful, but it would not do. She grew weaker and weaker, and at last could work no more. She did not take to her bed, but lay on a little couch her father made for her, down stairs.

Her little Mary was always beside her, and she would teach her hymns and prayers, which had never been forgotten.

One evening she called her to her, and said, "Mary, mother must go away soon; you mustn't cry, darling, and be unhappy, but you must be good and wait on dear grandfather; and Mary, you must never leave grandfather; don't forget, never leave him."

Poor little Mary begged her mother not to go, or to take her with her if she went, but she said, "Not now, darling; you must stay with grandfather, and if you are good, the great God will let us meet again I hope." She said no more, but kissed her child very earnestly and leant back; she shut her eyes, so little Mary thought she was asleep, and went up stairs to bed.

When she awoke in the morning, her grandfather was standing by her weeping; he took her in his arms, and said, "Dear mother is gone away, don't cry, my child, we'll go to her soon, please God." Very sad was poor little Mary for many days, but she remembered her mother's last words, and tried to do all she could for her grandfather. She seemed to have grown many years older in the last few months, and was quite a companion to him. Nothing would ever persuade her to leave him, not even to go to school. For there was no school near, and she must have left him for the whole day had she gone.

For eleven years they lived together, and then, one very severe winter, when there was a deep fall of snow, old May took cold, and though Mary went herself through the snow for the doctor, and did all she could for him, he did not get better, and the poor girl felt that she should have to part with him.

His only trouble was leaving her alone; he had no relations living, and in the event of his death, he had arranged for her to go to a sister of her father's, who lived about forty miles from them. He tried

to prepare her for her loss, and earnestly exhorted her wherever she was to serve and fear God, "and then, my child," he would say, "you will never want a friend."

He gave her her father's Prayer-book and Bible, for that was what the parcel contained that was brought to him with the news of his son-in-law's death, and said, "Though you cannot read them, my child, God may yet give you the means of learning, and they must always be precious to you; they were your father's dying gift to your dear mother."

One day he said he felt very weak, and would lie down on the little couch his Alice used to lie on, and he told Mary to go to the parsonage, and ask the clergyman to come to him. Mary hardly liked to leave him, but she went as fast as she could, and the clergyman returned with her. They found the old man had fallen asleep, and was sleeping as quietly as a child. When he opened his eyes he said, "Oh, what a blessed dream I have had! but please, Sir, to pray with me, for my time I feel is very short."

The clergyman instantly knelt beside him, but in a few moments a change came over his face, the commendatory prayer was said, and ere it was finished the spirit had left its earthly tenement.

It was a sad trial to poor Mary to part with him, but the clergyman was very kind to her, and so were all her neighbours. None liked to part with her, and many offered her a home, but she always said, "Grandfather wished me to go, so I had better go." And when the clergyman had made arrangements

for disposing of what little property her grandfather had left, he wrote to her aunt telling her to expect her, and poor Mary set off alone on what seemed to her a long, long journey.

How sad and lonely she felt at first among strange people and in a strange place! But her aunt was very kind to her, and soon found her a place as under-nurse in a gentleman's family. Here Mary saw much that she had never seen before; much that she knew her dear grandfather would never approve of; for there were many servants, and some who had no fear of God to keep them from sin, but still the thoughts of him and of his pious counsel came to her and kept her from being led away; and as she never failed to say morning and night the little prayers her dear mother had taught her, God preserved her in the midst of evil.

The lady and gentleman with whom she lived went every year to London, and one spring when they were there Mary caught the scarlet fever. They were so much afraid of the infection spreading through the house, that they had her removed as soon as possible to a lodging.

The fever left her so weak, that it was months before she could do much work, and in the meantime her mistress was obliged to engage another servant in her place. She had been very kind to Mary, and paid for her board and lodging and the doctor's bill. But now the time came for them to return into the country, and as Mary's place was filled, there was no need to take her with them, and

she was left in London. Her mistress gave her a sovereign at parting, and said she hoped she would soon hear of a place. Mary thanked her for all her kindness, and felt little fear about the future, for now she was well she thought it would be very easy to get into service again.

But week after week passed, and still she could hear of nothing, and almost all her money was spent. She grew very uneasy. The person of the house where she lodged began to think Mary could not pay much longer for her room, and often said she could not afford to let lodgings for nothing, and gave Mary many hints that when her money was gone she must go too.

Poor girl, she was very unhappy, and anxiety made her feel so unwell, that she began to fear she should be ill again, and then her heart did indeed sink within her. She hardly allowed herself food enough, for she was afraid all her money would be spent, and then what would become of her!

Her grandfather's words came often to her mind, "Serve and fear God, and then you will never want a friend." She tried to believe them, and not despair. But sometimes she felt sorely tried, when after walking about all day in search of a place, she would come home tired, cold and hungry, and creeping up to her little garret, would sit down in the dark and think, "Does God really care for me?" Then some verse from the Bible her grandfather had taught her, or some words of his own trust in God

that she remembered, would come to her mind and give her comfort and hope.

She could not afford to buy candles, so after she had eaten her little bit of bread for supper, and said her prayers, she used to go to bed. Often she would lie awake half the night, trying to think of some way of getting a living. Her aunt was dead, and the money that had been raised by the sale of her grandfather's things had gone to pay the last year's rent, and some other debts that the old man's illness and inability latterly to work had obliged him to contract. So she had no earthly friend to turn to; the clergyman of her parish, who had been so kind to her after her grandfather's death, had left, and she did not know where he was. She felt indeed as if she were alone in the world.

Yet still the words that she had learnt in her childhood of the "God of the fatherless" kept her from despair. And on Sundays she felt great comfort in going to a church near; she used to go into one of the free seats near the door, and it seemed like a home to her.

The future was dark indeed, and each day became more and more so, for her little sum of money, though she tried in every way to make it hold out, was fast dwindling away; and her landlady had given her plainly to understand, that when she could not afford to pay for her lodging she must leave the house.

One night when she had paid her week's rent, and

put by the next, she had only one shilling left. Her strength was fast failing her, insufficient food and continual anxiety had made her feel very weak, and when she went up stairs that night to bed she was afraid to take even her bit of bread for supper, for how was she to get more when it was gone. She tried to trust in God, and thought, "I can but die at last, and then perhaps God will take me to dear grandfather and mother."

Poor old man, he little thought his darling would ever have come to such misery. With an aching heart and weary limbs she laid down to rest that night. And there we must leave her for the present, for Amy is long since rested, and the first lesson is over, and poor Mary is rejoicing that all the letters come back to her mind, and she thinks of the day when her dear grandfather used to teach them to her.

She shall finish her own story another time, for here it was she had left off when she was telling it to Amy.

Amy reminded her this evening of her promise to finish it another time.

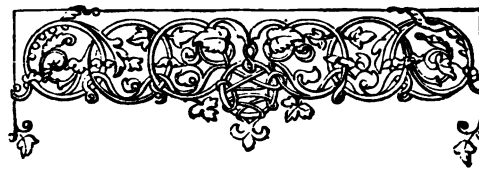
"I want so much to hear the end of your history, it does interest me so much," she said; "I must come on a Saturday afternoon, for then, as I have no school, I can pay you a long visit."

"Do, dear, it cheers my heart to see you," Mary answered, "and you shall hear the end of my story; I like to think over it all, it shews me how much I have to thank God for."

"And now I must wish you good night and run home," Amy said.

"God bless you, my dear; do not tire yourself, and many thanks for your reading lesson."

Amy had just time to get ready for the vicarage before evening service, but we will leave the account of her visit there for the next chapter.



CHAPTER IX.

"Then pass, ye mourners, cheerly on,
Through prayer unto the tomb;
Still, as ye watch life's falling leaf,
Gathering from every loss and grief
Hope of new spring and endless home."

Christian Year.

After service Miss Ellis joined Amy and walked with her to the vicarage. They had tea directly, and as soon as it was over Mr. Ellis went to his study; "You must not forget," Miss Ellis said as he was leaving the room, "to come back and give us your opinion and counsel on our scheme."

"Indeed, I will not," he said; "I am as much interested in it as you are, but I have some one waiting to see me."

"My brother told you, I think, how much we wish to establish a school for the elder girls."

"Yes, ma'am, he did, and I should think it would be very desirable."

"There are many girls," Miss Ellis continued, "who really are not able to come to school, the farm-house servants, for instance, and others who from good reason are unable to leave home to go to

service, and yet cannot be spared to go to school. We were reckoning them over the other day, and counted at least eighteen: Mr. Ellis has been to most of the farms, and has had permission for them to come for an hour and a half twice a week, and our idea was that he should have them in turns in the study, for half an hour's religious instruction, and if you will assist me I think we could manage to teach them reading and writing."

"I am sure I shall be very glad to help in any way I can," Amy answered; "it will be really a pleasure to me."

"It is very kind of you to say so, for I was quite afraid you would find it too much after your school in the day; and indeed, I hardly know now whether I ought to ask you."

"Pray do not say so; I am very strong, and it will not tire me at all, and I have so often thought what a good thing it would be if those poor girls who are obliged to stay at home could have some instruction."

"It has often made Mr. Ellis very anxious, and especially since the last Confirmation, for he was quite troubled at finding how sadly ignorant many of the girls were; his evening school for boys seems to answer so well, that we have felt very desirous to try one for girls, and I trust with God's blessing it may be of service to them; I hardly felt able to undertake it by myself, for sometimes I am obliged to be from home; but with your help, I have little doubt but that we shall be able to manage it."

"I suppose you intend it to be held in the girls' school-room?" Amy asked.

"Yes, we thought it would be much better there, and I expect though there will be so few we must divide them into three classes, and then each class can go to Mr. Ellis for half an hour."

"To his study, I think you said?"

"Yes, he prefers having them there, the school being so close it will not cause loss of time, and he thinks that instruction given in his study will make them feel more that they are with their pastor for guidance, and have less the feeling of a lesson than if given in the school-room; and then, too, he thinks if they were accustomed to go to him there, they would not feel afraid to come of their own accord at any time, if they were in any trouble or difficulty and needed advice; he has found it so with the boys, and it has been a great comfort to him in some instances to find that when much tempted by evil companions or other temptations, they have come to him to ask what they should do."

"What a blessing for them," Amy said, "for it is often the greatest help to have our duty put clearly before us; even when we know what is right, to have it set in a new way by others seems to clear away all doubts. It is very strange people should so little think of seeking advice on the way that our Lord Himself has told us is narrow and hard to find."

"It is strange, certainly, but I am afraid it is want of earnestness about finding the way that

causes the self-security, for when we begin to strive in earnest to walk along it, we see difficulties where before we deluded ourselves all was so smooth, and find the truth of our Lord's words, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way."

"I hope it may be blessed to them all," Amy said; "Mrs. Wilson often tells me how changed the parish is since Mr. Ellis came to it."

"I hope it is in some degree, but oh, we must not look to see the fruit of our labours here; and though there may be some change, there is so much to be done, that he often says he feels as if all his efforts were nothing; but still I am sure that God in His mercy will be with him, for indeed he has but one motive in all he does, to spread Christ's kingdom, and save those souls His Maker died to purchase."

"This will take up four evenings out of the six," Amy said; "will it not be almost too much for him?"

"Oh no, he will never let me say a word about that; he always says, Do people think all the evenings of the week too much to give up to worldly amusements, and shall the minister of Christ think he is doing too much when he does less in his Master's service? But indeed I am afraid he would be very much troubled if he knew how I am talking of him, so I think I had better get my work."

"Have you any work I can help you in, ma'am?" Amy asked; "I shall be so glad if I can be of use."

"Indeed you can be of very great use, for I am trying to finish some clothes for a poor family be-

yond Furze Bank, who are in a most destitute state, and from no idleness or carelessness, but from the father having been ill for weeks, and he is now much too weak to work." She went to her little sitting room to get the work, and in a few moments returned, and they set industriously about it. Amy was so glad to help, and she worked so fast and well, she was a great assistance.

After they had worked about half an hour Mr. Ellis came in looking very tired; "I hope I am not too late for the discussion," he said, "but I could not come before."

"Oh no, we want you to tell us when we are to begin, for we are quite ready," Miss Ellis said.

"I am very much obliged to you for your kindness in promising to help," he said, turning to Amy. "Have you ever had any elder girls to teach?"

"No, Sir, I have not; none older than there are now in the school."

"I hope you will not find it troublesome."

"Oh, I do not think I shall."

"When do you think of beginning?" Miss Ellis asked.

"I am in hopes of beginning next Monday; Tuesday and Friday are my evenings for the young men, and I thought of Monday and Thursday for the girl's school; you must make your lessons as amusing as you can, for the poor girls will no doubt be tired after their day's work, and my lessons must of course be very serious ones, and require all the attention."

"I think and hope we shall manage to make it pleasant to them, and make them enjoy coming," Miss Ellis answered; "Do you mean them to pay anything?"

"My idea is of having a little lending library in connexion with the school, and letting them pay some small sum, which shall admit them to both; I think they will be more likely to value what it is some little sacrifice to obtain."

"That will be a very nice plan," his sister answered; "and I think we might contrive to interest them in the books they have from the library by our lessons. Geography, I expect, will be a great amusement."

"Yes, I hope so," he answered, "and in these days of emigration it is very desirable the poor should have some knowledge of those lands where their friends are continually going, and where it is not impossible they themselves may go some day; besides, for a much higher reason such knowledge is valuable; how can we interest them in the spread of the Gospel when they have no idea of any country beyond their own, and can form no conception of the thousands and thousands of souls lying in utter darkness, and lands where the light of the Gospel has never shone? But we must not be too sanguine, for we, of course, shall meet with many drawbacks. I do not think," he said, turning to Amy, "that *you* would easily be discouraged, if you thought a thing right to do."

"I hope I should not, Sir," Amy answered, very

gently, for she never thought well of herself; "I would try not to be."

"We must all try our best, and look to God to bless our labours; before prayers to-night, if you will come with me into my study," he said, addressing his sister and Amy, "we will ask God's blessing on our undertaking."

Amy was so thankful for this offer, it was just what she was longing for, and she felt that a blessing must rest on any work so begun.

"Have you heard again from Elverton?" Mr. Ellis asked Amy.

"Only once, Sir; a few lines to say how Mr. Leslie was."

"I have had a most interesting letter from a friend of mine in that neighbourhood, Mr. Grey, who I dare say you may remember; he was at the funeral and knew I should like to hear. I have often thought you would like to hear it; I will read it to-night."

"Oh, thank you, Sir," Amy answered; and she could say no more, for the very mention of Elverton was almost too much for her.

Mr. Ellis went to his study to get the letter, and then read the following passage: "I know you will like to hear of our dear friend at Elverton, and I feel as if it would be a comfort to me to write to you of Tuesday, which was as you know the day of the funeral. It was a day that will never be forgotten in Elverton, as long as any one of the present generation lives I think. I trust it will never

pass from my memory. You noticed, I dare say, as many did, the brilliancy of the day, which after the week's heavy rain struck one more; it seemed indeed to forbid us to mourn, and to tell us how the saints in paradise rejoiced that another had joined their blessed company, where the sun shall no more go down. There was a very large attendance at the funeral, none were invited, but many requested permission to attend. It was strange that in the short time Mrs. Leslie was permitted to sojourn amongst us, she should have won such love from all; and she went out so very little that one would have thought she was almost unknown, but yesterday proved how mistaken that supposition was. I went over early to Elverton, but did not see poor Leslie; he was in the chamber of death till the last moment, kneeling beside the coffin, as his sister told me, perfectly absorbed, for he was quite unconscious of her presence when she went into the room, but his expression as he followed to the churchyard was something not of this earth. It was not sad exactly; indeed, at times, a look almost of joy, but awful joy, would pass over his face: I could only think that he *realized* the communion of saints, and felt that the spirit of her whose earthly tabernacle was thus borne before him, was really with him; they had lived together in Christ, and in Christ they still met. It was the most beautiful expression of a Christian mourner that I ever witnessed. On the coffin was her name and age, and the words 'Whosoever liveth, and believeth in Me, shall never die.' She was laid to rest beside

her little boy, and on the cross at his grave was hung a wreath of white roses; I do not know who put it there, but there was something beautiful in it. The churchyard was filled, and the expressions of grief from all, which seemed as if they could not be controlled, would, I feared, have been too much for the chief mourner; but I do not think he heard them, or was aware that there was any one present. After the Burial service was ended we returned to the church, and partook of the Bread of life, which truly seemed to strengthen and refresh the soul, and the peace of God to have descended on all; for the loud sobs were heard no more, and all returned sadly but calmly to their homes: Leslie was the last to leave the church, and then he went directly to his study and saw no one. I have called this morning and sat a long time with him, he looked very ill, but in every word and tone there was the expression of the most perfect resignation; he did not speak of her who is gone, but we talked much of the communion of saints, and the words carved on her coffin were, if I may so say, the *text* of our conversation. He seems to feel as if God had withdrawn the joys of his home from his sight, that he may withdraw his heart from all earthly things, and fix it where change can never come. May he be enabled to do so, and carry out into daily life the high and deep lessons that the school of adversity seems now to have taught him."

"It is an interesting letter, is it not?" said Mr. Ellis; "may we all profit by Mr. Leslie's example."

Amy could hardly answer, for her tears were flowing fast, but she thanked Mr. Ellis, and then, as it was ten o'clock, he proposed they should go into the study. In a few minutes he rang the bell for the servants, and after prayers Amy wished Mr. and Miss Ellis good night, and walked home, thinking of her dear Mrs. Leslie and her funeral day.





CHAPTER X.

"Thus when the storm of life is high
Come, Saviour, to my aid!
Come, when no other help is nigh,
And say, "Be not afraid."

Rev. H. F. Lyte.

Some weeks passed before Amy had a Saturday afternoon entirely at leisure to spend with Mary Carter, and hear the end of her history, the beginning of which had interested her so much. She had not however neglected the reading lessons, but when she could find an hour to spare she used to walk to Furze Bank and continue her instruction. And she had the comfort of finding that her labour was not in vain, for Mary got on faster than she had dared to hope, and as she was so eager to learn, she spared no trouble, and made a point of reading to herself several times in the day.

One gloomy, foggy afternoon the beginning of November, Amy put on her cloak and bonnet and determined to go at once to Furze Bank, and have a nice long time with her dear old friend. Mrs. Wilson looked a little uneasy at her preparations for going out, "Why, my dear," she said, "you will certainly take cold."

"I am not afraid, Mrs. Wilson," Amy answered;

"and as I have nothing particular to do at home this afternoon, I shall be so glad to spend it with Mary Carter."

"And I am sure she will be glad to see you, my child, so I will not hinder you; you will be back to tea?"

"I quite intend it, good-by for the present," she said, and set off briskly on her walk.

The country looked very different from what it did when we last followed Amy to Furze Bank. Six weeks had made a great change, and winter seemed nearly begun. She stopped almost by instinct at her favourite spot, but now little but thick mist and fog, and the tops of the nearly leafless trees, could be discerned. But sunshine within gives a charm to all external objects, and Amy did not think the view gloomy, but could see beauty in it still.

She soon reached Mary Carter's little cottage, it was neat and clean, as it always was, but her dear old friend was not there as usual to open the door and welcome her. And as Amy knocked, a faint voice answered, "Come in." She went in and found Mary looking very ill and weak, and lying on a little wooden couch, that was in one corner of the room. Her face brightened as she saw Amy, "Oh, it is you! how glad I am to see you," she said.

"I am afraid you have been ill," Amy said gently, going up to her.

"Yes, dear, I have, very poorly: but the Lord has raised me up. I thought the two last days I

was going to be very bad indeed, but I am better again."

"Why did you not send for me? you know how gladly I would have come; indeed you should have sent."

"Oh, it was not fit nights for you to be out in, and I knew you could not come till after school, and I did very well, they were very kind to me; but now, dear, take off your cloak and sit by me; I like to see your young face, it does me good."

"I am afraid you will not be well enough to tell me the end of your story," Amy said, drawing a little low chair close to the couch, and sitting beside her.

"Oh, I can, it will not tire me, and though there is not much in it, I should like you to hear the end; but tell me, where did I leave off?"

"With that sad night when you had nothing but one shilling, and no thought how you could get another."

"It *was* a sad night, dear; Oh, I am afraid there are many, many such to many poor creatures in that great, wide place; I never want to see it again; I wish poor young girls that go up to London to get a place, thinking all must go well there, could know one half that I suffered; but thank God for it all, it taught me many a lesson, and now I'll go on.—I did not sleep much that night, as you may think; I was thinking over what I was to do, and what was to become of me. I tried to pray and to put my trust in God. Morning came at last, though I thought it

never would; the blessed light is a long time finding its way to those narrow high streets, and when it came I got up because I felt too restless to lie in bed, though I did not know what was the use of getting up, for I had nothing to do. However, when I was up, I thought I would go down and ask the woman of the house if I could do anything for her; I used to do little things for her, for she had a young baby, and though she was hard to me, I believe it was as much as she could do to live herself. As I was just sweeping out the room, a woman came in, she was a kind body, I had often seen her there, and she used to look kindly at me and seem sorry for me,—and a kind look, when you are very cast down, helps the heart to rise a little. But this morning she came up to me and said, 'Have you heard of anything yet?'

"I could hardly answer her, I felt so weak, as if the words would not come for tears; she saw how it was, and said, 'Don't be quite cast down, I heard last night of a place about two miles out of town, where they were wanting a strong, active girl from the country; do you think you would be fit for it?'

"'I can but try, and God bless you for telling me of it,' I answered, though when she said a strong active girl my mind misgave me, that I should never do now. I asked her where it was, and she told me, and said, 'Come into my room before you go;' and then, poor creature, she insisted on my taking some breakfast with her, for she said I looked half starved, and so I was. I have never seen her

since, for she left London next day; but, oh, I trust she has never wanted a meal, and that the Lord has repaid her kindness a hundred-fold to her.

"I dressed myself as neatly as I could and set off on my long walk. I was obliged to go very slowly, and when I got to the house, the servants told me their mistress was out, and would not be in for some hours, but seeing, I suppose, that I looked disappointed, one of them said I could sit down and wait if I liked till she came in, and she put me a chair in a little dark passage. I was very much obliged to her, and very thankful to sit down, and hour after hour I sat there; I was so weak I dozed from lowness most of the time; but I thought the time would never pass, and it was getting quite evening, when the same servant who gave me the chair came to me and told me her mistress was come in, and she took me to her. The lady spoke very kindly to me, but said she was sure I was not fit for the place, as it was a very hard one, they were so many in family; she only staid a minute or two and then went away, but it was as much as ever I could do to keep the sobs down whilst she spoke, and as I left the house I cried like a child; it was my last hope, and now it seemed to me I might lie down and die. But, oh, it was very faithless, and may God forgive me for not trusting Him more.

"If I was long going I was twice as long going back, for the hope that had kept me up in the morning being gone, I felt all my weakness. I was still a long way from my lodging, when I felt so wearied

out, as if I had no strength to go a step further, and I sat down for a minute or two to rest on a door-step. As I was sitting there a girl about my age passed me, she was dressed very smart, and after she passed, she turned back, and said, 'What are you sitting here for?' I told her it was because I could go no further. 'Come with me,' she said, 'I'll soon get you something to do you good.' I did not like to go with her, her looks almost frightened me, but she took me by the arm, and said, 'Come, you will be taken up if you sit there,' and hardly knowing what I did I went with her; she almost pulled me along, for I had little strength to walk, and going down a narrow street, she stopped before a brightly-lighted house. It was full of people laughing and talking, though some looked very miserable. 'What's this?' I said; 'where am I?' for the bright light quite bewildered me: she only laughed and drew me in, and then pointed to a low stool there was in the corner of the large room, and I sat down, for I couldn't stand. 'Have you got a penny?' she said; 'if you have, I'll get you something to do you good.' I gave her a penny, for I felt I must have something or I should faint, and she brought me a glass half full, and said, 'Drink it quick.' I don't know what it was, but I suppose it was some kind of spirits, for it was very hot, but it kept me from fainting, and in a few moments I began to revive, and then I could hear the bad sad words that there were being used, and the wicked talk that was going on, and I felt quite frightened, and

started. The girl who brought me in saw me move, and said, 'You are not going.' I told her I must go, and would have run out of the place had I had strength to do it, for the looks of the people and the words I heard made me shudder. The girl caught my arm and I could hardly get out; she still kept to me, and said, 'Why do you go? you have no home to go to; why don't you stay and be merry with us?' 'I can't stay,' was all I could say; she kept asking me why, and talked on in a sad way; she said much that sickened my heart to hear, and when I said, 'Oh, think of the Lord that hears you, and don't talk so,' she shook my arm so suddenly, and said, 'Stop, stop, don't speak of that,' and then she tried to laugh, and called me silly; she said she knew what it was to work day and night to get bread to keep off starving, and to find it wouldn't do; she had given it up, and I was foolish and mad to try, and had better give it up too. I tried to speak to her, and said, it was better to die here, than to be cast into hell hereafter. Oh, poor creature! I shall never forget her look: she looked wildly at me, and wrung her hands, and almost screamed, 'Too late, too late, don't say it again, I knew it all once, I had a good mother, and went to school and was a happy child, but now my mother, if she were alive, would cast me from her, all who knew me would hate me; no, it is too late, I can't go back.' I said all I could, and told her it was never too late with the Lord, if we only prayed Him to turn us; but she said, what was she to do, and what was to become of her, she

had no place to go to, she must lie down and die. I told her to trust to the Lord, and oh, how I longed to be able to take her away, but I had no place to take her to, and she wrung her hands again and said, 'Why did you speak to me? it's all no use, and it nearly drives me wild to hear it; go away yourself, go, and never come to this misery,' and she darted from me. It's many years since that night, but it's all fresh in my mind, and that poor creature with her look of despair haunted me for days. I prayed for her, I could do nothing else, and how often in church when we pray for all who are desolate and oppressed, has she come to my mind.

"But I am making a long story. I got back at last that night, with a sad but thankful heart, that God had preserved me yet awhile, and I laid down with a more cheerful mind, for death did not seem half so sad now I had seen such misery. The next day was Sunday, and I went as usual to church. I felt very ill all church-time, and after service was over I was so faint that I sat down on a step to try to get strength to go on, but it wouldn't do, and I felt getting worse and worse till I lost all sense and fainted away. When I came to myself there were a good many people round, and one voice sounded so strange in my ears, I thought I was dreaming, for I heard a voice that took me back to my dear old home. I tried to rouse myself to make out what it was, and where I was, and opposite to me when I could look up stood our dear old clergyman. I was nearly going off again when I saw him, but I had

just strength to say his name; he started when I said it, and said, 'Who are you? is it possible you are poor James May's granddaughter?'

"But I must bring my story to an end, and oh, how thankful do I feel as I think of it all; the good clergyman, he called a hackney coach and made me get in, and got in himself and took me to his house; he had a sister living with him, and she was so kind; they gave me food and made me rest, and then they asked me my history. I told them all, and oh, bless the Lord for it, they took me into their service. Have I not good reason to say, 'they that trust in the Lord shall never be forsaken?'"

"You have indeed," Amy answered, much interested in this history; "it is good for us to hear of the watchful care of our heavenly Father, for I am afraid we do not remember it as we should; but that poor creature, did you never see her again?"

"No, I never heard of her or saw her; I told my dear old master of her, for I thought perhaps he might be able to do something, but as I did not even know the name of the street where I had seen her, it was quite hopeless. Poor creature, yet surely had she trusted in the Lord, she had never come to such misery. And now the rest of my story will soon be told; I lived on very happily with my dear kind master and his sister for five years, at the end of that time I married a fellow-servant; my good master married us himself, and a kind husband I had, but it pleased the Lord to take him from me when we had been married only three years, and I

was left with two little ones, the eldest only just two.

"I seemed now more desolate and forlorn than ever, but I had not forgotten all that my early sorrows had taught me, and could really now put my trust in the Lord, and say, 'Let Him do what seemeth Him good,' and He did not forsake me. I did not tell you that when we married our kind master got my dear husband a place as upper servant in a family in the country, and I lived at the lodge, and he came home to me at night when his work was done; oh, those were happy days, I forgot my early troubles in blessing God for the happiness I had then. Well, when my dear husband was taken from me, my mistress was very kind, and said I should stay on at the lodge, and have the washing of the family, and that well supported me and my two darling children. My dear little girl was early taken; her father loved her so, that I used to think the Lord took her to join him, and that was a great comfort to me, in those sad hours when I missed her little face and sweet merry voice, and could hardly stand to my washing, sorrow made me feel so weak and trembling. But I used to say again and again to myself, It is the will of God, and pray that my will might bow to His blessed will, and peace came at last, and I could thank God that He had taken that sweet child away from this world with its temptations, before sin had taken the bright look from her bonny face.

"I lived on there till my boy was grown up, and

the master used to have him to work in his garden, till he learnt the business, and then when he was of an age to take a place, he got him to be under gardener to Mr. Stewart, and we came here, and I have lived in this little cottage ever since. And a good dutiful son he has been to me, my comfort and my pride: his mother shall never want, he says, as long as he has strength to work for her. And now I have finished my story; as I tell it, it teaches me again and again, that those that put their trust in the Lord shall never be confounded. May we all learn to trust Him more and serve Him better."

"Amen," Amy quietly whispered, "thank you much for telling it me, I hope I may learn from it too, I shall not forget it."

"And now," Mary said, "great a treat as it is to me to have you here, I shall beg you to go, for the mist is rising in the valley, I am afraid you will take cold, and what will Mrs. Wilson think of me then?"

Amy assured her her cloak was so warm she was not afraid, and warmly wishing each other good night, they parted; Amy on the walk home in health and strength, Mary to lie still on her couch of suffering; and yet both were happy, for both tried to have no will but God's.



CHAPTER XI.

"Lord! have mercy when we know
First how vain this world below,
When the earliest gleam is given
Of Thy bright but distant Heaven!"
Milman.

Amy did not forget her promise to pay Jane Morris a visit. They frequently met, for Jane was a great walker, and had often come after school hours in the summer evenings, and walked back by moonlight, Amy and Mrs. Wilson going part of the way with her. She was fond of Amy, and Amy liked her; though her lively gossipping style of conversation was not at all to her taste. Jane often laughed at Amy for being so quiet and old-fashioned, and told her it would be much better for her to be merry and gay as she was. Amy would smile good humouredly, and tell her she was quite happy, and did not want to be merrier; and in her heart Jane used sometimes to long to change with Amy, for though so merry she was not always happy; she had at times a restless longing for change, and found her regular school life dull and uninteresting, and Amy's even happiness and content were almost enviable.

One afternoon, some weeks after Amy's visit to Mary Carter related in the last chapter, when the frost had begun, and winter seemed set in in good earnest, as Amy was sitting by the cheerful fire in Mrs. Wilson's little parlour, finishing some work she was helping Mrs. Ellis in, she heard a merry laugh and a rattling on the window pane, and Jane Morris came in.

"I'm so glad to find you in, Amy," was her first exclamation; "I wanted so much to see you;" and sitting down close by her side she went on, "We are going to break up school in a fortnight, for the Christmas holidays, but before the children leave there is to be a grand examination. An examining master is coming down, and all the ladies and gentlemen in the neighbourhood are to attend, and other people too. I am so pleased about it, really it will give one quite a stir, and I was getting so dull, and some of the elder girls will do me great credit, I shall work at them hard this next fortnight; Amy, you must come, I shall so enjoy your being there; will it not be pleasant?"

"I hope you will find it so, dear Jane, I am not sure I should, but then you know I am different from you, 'quiet and old-fashioned,' you say I am, and I think I am, for I cannot like this new system of grand examinations altogether."

"What nonsense, Amy! why don't you like them? I am sure it is a very good thing to interest parents about their children."

"Oh yes, I think that is an excellent thing; I

should like an examination for the parents one evening in every quarter, if it could be had; but then I do not think this will be exactly for the parents, for they will most of them be out at work; perhaps I am wrong in not quite liking it, I dare say I am, but my feeling is this,—the only end and object of our teaching is, or ought to be, to make the children good Christians and useful in the station where God has placed them; now in these examinations it is not the best children that are praised and placed first, but those who happen to be the quickest; they may be good, but still what I feel is, that it is intelligence and not goodness that is the subject of admiration, and I cannot but think there is a great danger of its making the children vain, and ourselves neglect our duty by taking more pains with those children who we think will do us credit, than with every one alike; but I am making a long speech, dear Jane, and after all if we only taught our children as we ought there would not be such danger."

Jane said nothing for some time, for there was something in what Amy had said that made her think; at last she said,—

"I'm sure I don't know whether you are right or wrong, Amy, but I only know that I can't be always thinking as you are what is really best; I am dull enough as it is, and I must have something to amuse me, I can't think how you manage to get on."

"Me! dear Jane, oh, I am so very happy, why

I have something to do all day long, and Mrs. Wilson is so kind."

"Yes," Jane answered, "I dare say she is, but you must want other company besides hers, I should think."

"And I have other company; Miss Ellis often comes and sits with me, and asks me to go and see her; there are several old and sick people Mr. Ellis sends me to see, and then there is the morning and evening service and the school; I often think how very thankful I ought to be for the many blessings I have, and the happy life I lead."

Jane felt quite reproached, and she said, sadly, "I wish I could feel the same; but Amy, you have had a good deal of sorrow, I don't think you really can be so very happy."

"Yes, Jane, I am, thank God; I feel how very good the sorrow was for me, you know without it life might have seemed too bright; and I feel how very merciful our heavenly Father was in taking away what was most precious to me on earth, for now you know this world can never be to me what it used to be, and I feel so very sure that we shall never be really happy till we have learned that we have no right to look for happiness here, but must be thankful and content with what our heavenly Father sends us, knowing that is just what is good for us."

"Yes, Amy, that is all very true, but oh! how very difficult it is to learn!"

"It is indeed, Jane, but we must not despair be-

cause the lesson is difficult; you know we tell the children to try the more the harder the lesson is, and we must do the same, and above all we must remember," she said very quietly, "that by ourselves we can do nothing, but by God's grace all things."

"Well, Amy, I wish you were nearer to me, and I think I should be better."

"Oh no, Jane, don't say so, no one could help you as you can help yourself by prayer and earnest striving; and I am sure I find it so very difficult to do right myself, that I cannot think I can help any one else."

"Do you really find it difficult? I am quite glad to hear it; I thought being good came quite naturally to you."

"Please don't call me good, Jane, I really dislike it so much; of course we all have our trials; do you think the enemy of our souls, who we are told is ever seeking to devour them, would let us try to do right without putting hindrances in our way? we could not be soldiers of the cross if we had not to fight our way to heaven."

"Yes, of course that is true, Amy, but I am sure it is much easier to some to be good than to others."

"Jane, to serve God with our whole hearts and love Him above everything can never be easy but by the grace of God helping us, and that all may have if they ask."

"But, Amy, I know that: it's not that that I

mean; what I am thinking, if I speak out, is, that it is much easier for you to go on quietly, caring for nothing but doing your duty, than it is for me; you like it, and I do not."

"I wish you would speak of some one else than me, dear Jane; it is so bad for us to talk of ourselves."

"Oh, never mind that now, Amy; I really want help, and you must go on; was it always as easy for you to be so quiet and contented as it is now? had you never any longings for change and excitement?"

"I have had so much help, and been so watched over, that I feel as if God had mercifully kept me from great temptation, but I used often to have those feelings you speak of; Mr. Leslie told me it was very wrong, that we ought to do our duty each day to God, and not allow ourselves to wish for anything but what He gave us, and then we should always feel calm and contented; it was not at all easy at first to stop all the foolish thoughts and longings that used to come to my mind, but when we set ourselves earnestly to try, and pray God to help us to do what is right, it becomes soon so much easier; and Mr. Leslie used often to tell me that perseverance was the great thing, never to give over trying."

"What a help it must have been to you to have had Mr. Leslie to teach you! How did you come to talk to him and know him so well? Except when preparing for my confirmation I never had any one

to talk to me, and then I never said anything myself, or asked any questions."

"Did you not, Jane? but then how did you know how to overcome your own particular temptations? it is just like going to see a doctor and never telling him what is the matter with you; how could he tell you what to do to get better if he did not know what you felt? he could only give general advice about sickness, not about your particular sickness."

"I believe, Amy, I thought very little about my own particular faults, I am afraid that was the reason; and indeed I fear I think very little more now," Jane said sadly; "it always seems to me as if life would be so dull, and we should be so melancholy, if we were always thinking of those things."

"Oh no, don't think so. I am quite certain there is no happiness this world can give that can for a moment be compared with the peace and joy God's Holy Spirit gives to those who strive to serve Him; only try, dear Jane, and do not despair, remember we must love God above everything, or we have no real love for Him."

"When I am talking with you, Amy, I feel as if I would try earnestly, but then I go away and others come and talk to me and all my good thoughts melt away, the things of heaven grow less and less, and the things of earth soon spring up and quite shut them out from sight."

"Our good thoughts would not go away if we prayed God to fix them in our hearts." As Amy said "prayed God," a thought came over her, Shall

I ask Jane to pray with me before she goes? she felt a shyness and nervousness about doing it, as she had never yet proposed it to her, but after a moment's pause and lifting up of the heart for guidance, she said, "Would it not help us to remember what we have been talking of, Jane, if before we part we were to pray God to fix it in our minds? shall we go into my room and say some prayers together?"

Jane seemed very glad of the proposal, and together they knelt and prayed for strength and perseverance.

Jane kissed Amy as they rose from their knees, and said, "Thank you, dear Amy, I hope I shall remember, but I am very weak and foolish, and I have so many who talk with me on worldly things, and none but you who help me, I almost wish I had not so many friends; but when first I came I was glad to make acquaintances, and so made friends with any one who came to see me."

Amy felt how thankful she ought to be that Mrs. Leslie had warned her against making acquaintances; she only said, "If you try to serve God, Jane, He will send you all the help you need."

"I wish the rector took more interest in the school," Jane said, "but really he and his wife are out visiting so much they have not time for it. Mrs. Edwards is very kind to me when I do see her, but I hardly ever go to the house, and if I do I only see her for a moment, they have so much company, of course they cannot attend to everything."

Amy stopped the thought that was rising in her mind, that the poor and the schools always had the first attention at Elverton, any company, any visiting, was given up, before they were neglected, but she felt she had no right to judge, and again only said, "God will give you help, dear Jane, if you ask Him." Jane looked much more thoughtful than usual, and Amy felt hopeful as she quietly helped her on with her things.

"Then you will come to me, Amy, will you not, for the examination? if you will not enjoy it, at any rate it will be a comfort to you to know your being there will be a help to me."

"Yes indeed, I will come, Jane, if I can, I don't know that anything will prevent me, for I think we shall break up school a little before you will."

"Can you walk part of the way with me?"

"Not this evening, I am afraid, Jane, for our long talk interested me so much I did not go on with my work, and I want to finish it for Miss Ellis this evening."

"Do you work for Miss Ellis?"

"Yes, I am so glad to help her, she has so much to do, she makes so many things for the poor; and it is such pleasant work, for one knows it is not wasting time to do it."

"No, dear Amy, I am sure *you* do not think anything done for others can be wasting time," Jane said; and she was going to add again, "I wish I were like you," but remembering Amy's look of distress when praised before, she checked the words

and wished her good-bye, and walked home more gravely than her wont; pondering in her heart that there were other ends in life besides getting on, being quick and industrious. To have no other end in life but to live to the glory of God seemed at present almost too narrow a road for her to follow. But the struggle had begun, the good spirit was striving, her Lord was knocking at her heart. Shall He be shut out?



CHAPTER XII.

"There are who tread life's weary way
And have no home,
True saints, who realize each day
The world to come:
. . . . . .
Lone souls are they,
No other lot they seek,
Than here to watch and pray
From week to week,
As did their Master, calmly waiting on,
Doing each day what duty bids be done
As to their Lord."

K. K.

We will leave Amy to finish her work whilst we follow Jane on her walk home. We said she was graver than was her wont, for to think much was always a trouble to Jane. She had allowed her mind to be filled with so many and such trifling things, that to keep it fixed on one subject was a great effort, and one, it must be confessed, which she seldom troubled herself to make. Amy's words were still in her ear, "Serve God with our whole hearts, and love Him above everything;" she thought to herself, "Oh, I can never do that," and then she remembered Amy had said, "God will give you help," and as she walked on she tried to pray for

help, and it was well she seized the present moment, for her good thoughts were soon to be put to the test.

As she got over the stile that brought her out into the road leading to Alfont, she saw two girls on before her, they were the daughters of a farmer, and some of those whom she would generally have called her friends. But this evening the interview with Amy was too recent, she had now too fully realized what friendship is, to feel at all inclined for a hollow kind, and she lessened her pace, hoping they would turn home without noticing her; but one of them looking back saw her, and they waited till she came up.

"You are taking a late walk, Jane,—where have you been?" Harriet Thomas asked, and then without waiting for an answer, went on, "We have just been choosing our new bonnets for Christmas, they will be so pretty;" and she began an animated description of their bonnets and of all the others contained in the milliner's shop in the next town, in which her sister joined her.

Why was it that all this which would in general have been so interesting to Jane, was now quite tedious, and she could hardly keep up sufficient attention to make the proper remarks on what she was told?

Why? but because she was beginning to feel that there are other things to occupy the mind of the Christian than taking "thought for the body," what we shall "put on," and that when those other and

important things are thought of as they ought to be, all else sinks back to its proper place and appears but trifling.

For some time her companions talked on so fast that they did not notice her abstracted look, but when they did they laughed and ascribed it to any cause but the right one. And they went on to tell of all the gay doings they were to have during the Christmas week, and ended with, "Won't it be pleasant, Jane? you must come too; but what are you thinking about? you don't seem to care for it at all."

"Oh, yes, very pleasant," Jane answered hurriedly. "Thank you for asking me, but now I must wish you good night and go home."

"Oh no, don't go home just yet, come in and sit with us for half an hour."

For once Jane felt more inclined to be alone than in company, the little prayer had not been breathed in vain, and she declined. But as they pressed her eagerly to come, if it were only for a few minutes, she sought not again for strength, and though she felt how necessary it was for her to be alone now, she had not the resolution to persevere in her refusal, and went with them. Once in the house, the few minutes passed on to an hour, and in the merry trifling conversation of Harriet Thomas and her brothers and sisters, all her earnest better thoughts were melted away.

At last the clock struck ten, and Jane took leave of her friends and went home.

Why was it that she shrunk from the solitude of her own room that night, and longed to have some one to talk to, and not to have time to think? Because a voice within would speak and she did not want to hear it, and would willingly have drowned its "still small voice" by any earthly sound. But there was none. She was alone, alone with her conscience and her God. She could not altogether dismiss the thoughts that came to her mind, but she did, what alas! so many do, put them off to "a more convenient season." "Of course all Amy said is quite true," she reasoned with herself, "and I quite intend to think about it, but there is no need to be in such a hurry, I have so many things to think of now, when they are done and Christmas is passed, and all these gay doings are over, I shall have more time, and then I really will try and think more seriously;" and quieting her mind with these good resolutions she fell asleep. Poor Jane! how many have deluded themselves like you, and have refused to listen to the gentle, loving, "still small voice," and it has to be changed to the earthquake that shakes and up-roots all our earthly stays and joys; and the purifying fire that burns out all that fills our souls and blinds our eyes, before the deaf heart and dull soul will hear and understand. Have we not need ever to remind ourselves, "*now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation?" Will what is difficult to-day be easier to-morrow? Will it be easier to unloosen the chain when each day its weight takes from our strength, and its links become

rusty and more firmly knit? Alas! no. The poor captive will groan under its burden, but day by day the strength and energy with which he resolved to labour to be free when first he felt its humiliating bonds, will become less and less, unless kept up by daily strivings, and happy is he if he does not at last sink down in despair, or perhaps almost as fearful indifference.

Amy's thoughts were very different from Jane's as she retired to her own happy little room, and felt a peace and joy in the very sensation of being alone, free and undisturbed, for prayer and meditation. This evening's conversation had made her very hopeful for her friend, and after praying earnestly for her, she sank into a calm, happy sleep. And now we will leave them both while we take one look where Amy's dream most likely carried her, to her happy home at Elverton. The pleasant old rectory looked as calm and peaceful in this clear starlight December night, as it did when first we visited it in the warm summer's evening six months ago. The church rose up beside it in still and solemn beauty, the white grave-stones stood round as watchers beside the tombs of the departed. Let us look at it carefully and see what changes there have been since last our eyes rested on it. Beside the little cross we then noticed, stands another precisely the same in form, but larger, and on it the words,

"Here rests in hope,
Ellen Leslie.
Taken hence 3rd September, 185—
Aged, 25.
'Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.'"

The moon comes suddenly out from behind a cloud, and by its mild rays we can read them. But who is that who looks on it too, and repeats half audibly the words, "sleep in Jesus?" We know who it is, without turning to look. Yes, it is Mr. Leslie. Often he came forth when all earthly sounds were hushed, to realize by that grave the communion of saints. No repining, no murmuring thoughts crossed his mind for an instant, as he thought of the sweet young wife who had so blessed his home, of the darling child at whose birth they had together so rejoiced and praised the Lord for His goodness. His only idea of resignation was having no will but God's, and loving the revelation of that will, whatever sacrifices it might require of him; and he would never have thought that heart resigned which submits with a chafed spirit, as giving up to a hard master what there is no power to withhold from him, instead of the dutiful loving spirit of a child willingly resigning whatever is most precious, when his father, whose love he never doubts, takes from him the treasures he had lent.

To-night his countenance bore marks of great agitation. He stood for some time beside the grave

in deep thought, then drawing out a key from his pocket he walked to the chancel door, and entering, closed the door behind him and knelt in earnest prayer. It was in truth as one wrestling in prayer, that he there knelt to implore, from Him of whom nothing is asked in vain, the spirit of entire self-sacrifice. It was not only that he might be enabled to resign all that in earth had been most precious to him that he prayed, but that he might for ever give up his whole spirit, soul and body to God, to speak, to will, to do but as God would have him, to feel that he was not his own but God's alone, to be ever guided by Him only, and as the pen is directed by the hand of the writer, and made to express his thoughts, that thus his whole life might be but the expression of his Master's will. Long he knelt. More than once he rose to depart, and again sank down in deep, absorbing devotion. They were no ordinary thoughts that agitated the mind, as the soul poured itself forth alone before its God. But at length the wrestling was over, the struggle was past, the victory was gained. Calm, but with firmly-pressed lips, and face almost as pale as the marble tombs around him, he rose and left the church. He lingered but a moment beside the sacred grave. Something was to be done—it must be done at once, while grace was strong within. He entered his study and took up a letter that lay beside his open Bible. It was a foreign letter, and had been evidently much read; he turned at once to the passage he sought, and read these words:

"I cannot sufficiently state the urgency of the case. Had we men, earnest, self-denying men, the work might yet be done; we might by God's mercy even now at the eleventh hour redeem the time, and wipe off the foul stain from our Church and land, that a Christian country can have possessions for years, use immortal souls to amass riches, and yet do nothing to give to those 'who lie in darkness and the shadow of death,' the light of the glorious day-spring from on high which hath visited them, but which they, alas! so little regard. What we need is apostolic, devoted men, men who would hazard their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus, who having counted the cost, resolved to give up all that makes life enjoyable, home, country, friends, put their hand to the plough and never look back; who come content and prepared to live and die amongst a race of savages, unknown, forgotten among men. It does I know seem much to expect, to ask. Yet is it so? Shall disciples of Him who thought not His throne in heaven too much to give up for fallen, ungrateful man, think they give up too much, if they give up home for Him? No, I despair not, they will be found. He, who in the Church's first need but bid His disciples pray that labourers should be sent into His vineyard, will hear our prayers for help. Some heart will be touched by His grace to say, 'Here am I, send me.' Those who, like yourself, have such ties as wife and child, cannot, if they would, answer this call. But are there not many who are alone; whose homes God in His

unerring wisdom has made desolate; will they not forsake all and follow Him: who to such has promised that they shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life?'"

This letter, written many months ago, reached Mr. Leslie a few days after the death of his wife; it was from a college friend, now a colonial bishop. He had heard nothing of the illness of Mrs. Leslie. Mr. Leslie's last letter spoke in grateful terms of the blessings of his home; his wife aiding him in all his plans; their darling child rejoicing them with his merry smiles.

Little did his friend think as he wrote this letter in answer, what changes had come over that happy home. And yet was it not intended that it should be written?

To Mr. Leslie it came as a call from God. Long had he pondered whether the voice spoke to *him;* long had he struggled to subdue all earthly feelings that made him cling to his beloved though desolate home, to his wife's grave, to the church he had adorned so beautifully for the service of God. Often did the thought come to him, Am I right to leave my people? Can I leave them? The young that I love as my children; the old who look to me for comfort; those struggling with the world's temptations who come to me for help? But were there not others who could fill his place here, who was there who would go to these poor strangers, "having no hope and without God in the world?" He knew too of one to whom he could thankfully commit the care

of his beloved flock. One who would cherish them as a father his children, a man like-minded with himself, who would "care for their state," who was labouring beyond his strength in a large parish, with a very small stipend and non-resident rector, and to whom the quiet of Elverton with its pure air would, with God's blessing, restore health and strength and prolong a life so valuable to the Church.

The bishop, to whom he had made known his thoughts, though most unwilling to lose such a man from his diocese, felt too strongly, with Mr. Leslie, that the call was from God, to endeavour for a moment to dissuade him from his purpose, and could only bid him God speed. He promised to give his living to the friend he so earnestly desired should succeed him in his precious charge.

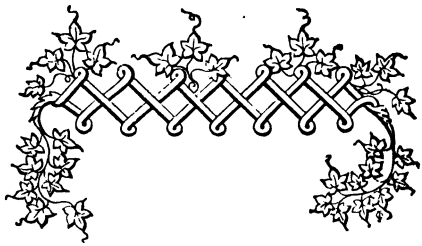
And now all seemed settled. But at the last, when his mind, he thought, was quite made up, the adversary of souls made one desperate effort to tempt him to draw back; renewed all the doubts, and brought up vividly all he was giving up, and the desolateness of the life he was entering upon.

This fearful struggle it was that made him seek the solemn stillness of the churchyard and the church's sacred walls for prayer. And now, "strengthened and refreshed," he had returned to his room to write the letter that was to decide all and fix his resolution irrevocably. The thoughts that had been poured out so fully before his God, could not be expressed to an earthly friend. He

sat down, intending to write a long letter, but he could not, and in a few words told his friend that the letter he had written to him, rejoicing with him in the rich blessings of his home, had found him alone, that "home made desolate by God's unerring wisdom," and he was ready to answer his call for help and say, "Here am I, send me." He added that his arrangements for leaving were nearly completed; that he should, God willing, sail by the next ship, and concluded with, "'strive with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God,' and having undertaken this work may labour on 'and not be weary,' being 'faithful unto death.'"

And now, this letter written and sealed, he lay down to rest; for many nights he had little sleep, but to-night he slept the peaceful slumber of a weary child that is lulled to rest on its mother's bosom.

And here we will leave him too. Oh! could we so resign ourselves to our heavenly Father, would not our whole life be calm and happy, like the child who fears no harm while feeling its mother's arm around it. And yet "she may forget," but He "will not forget."



CHAPTER XIII.

"Now how many may be given
To that during fiery lake,
Who had found a place in Heaven
Hadst thou toil'd for Jesus' sake,
Hadst thou but watch'd and pray'd their souls to save
Before upon them clos'd the never-opening grave."

The Baptistery.

CHRISTMAS drew on. The school at Lignwood broke up for a fortnight's holiday, and Amy went, according to her promise, to see Jane Morris and be present at the school examination at Alfont.

They had had a quiet little examination at Lignwood, which Amy had much enjoyed. Mr. Ellis had fixed it for the evening, that the parents might be present, and had invited them all, and had made it as interesting to them as he could. Most of them came, and seemed really pleased to see how well their children were getting on. There was great joy at an invitation Mr. Ellis gave to the children to tea one evening in Christmas week, when all the

games that could be thought of were to be played, and the school-room was to be dressed up with holly and evergreens for the occasion.

Amy had often thought of her last conversation with Jane, and looked forward with more pleasure than usual to their next meeting. She was to go the day before the examination, and Jane was to walk half way to meet her. So after dinner she set off with a little basket on her arm carrying the few things she would require, and Mrs. Wilson accompanying her part of the way. They talked pleasantly, as they always did, for they had one subject, at least, in common, which never wearied either of them to speak of. And when Mrs. Wilson left her, Amy walked cheerfully on alone, thinking how bright and beautiful everything looked this clear frosty afternoon.

Jane set off at the same time on her walk; she too looked forward with pleasure to the meeting; for though far different thoughts had occupied her mind, than the subject of her last conversation with Amy, yet she felt a calmness with her that she did with no one else, and she had been in such a continued hurry and bustle the last fortnight that the thought of an hour's quiet walk and talk was quite refreshing. Her own thoughts were not very pleasant companions, for she could not at times help feeling the unsatisfactoriness of the life she was leading, and yet could not resolve to change entirely, so she hurried on to meet Amy to get rid of her own company.

She went up a steep path over one of the fields so fast, that when she reached the top quite out of breath, she leant against the stile to rest, and some little way from her saw Amy coming on. Jane could not help standing to watch her, "How happy she looks," she thought; "though she is so quiet and grave, I think she is really happier than I am." Amy, quite unaware that she was watched, walked on very leisurely, feeling as happy as Jane thought she looked.

They were a great contrast, those two girls, in every way, and yet perhaps by nature they were not unlike. But now a stranger would have thought them as different as possible. In appearance they were very unlike. Amy with her neat black dress and cloak, (she still wore mourning for Mrs. Leslie,) her hair smoothly parted on her forehead, and plain white cap within her black bonnet. Jane in a gay-looking dress and shawl, bonnet filled with ribbons, and hair in curls. She was very fond of dress. Amy had been so too as a child, but had been taught how foolish and wrong it was, and no doubt it was the knowledge of this latent taste, that made her lay down such strict rules for herself with regard to what she wore.

But we left Jane leaning against the stile. Amy soon came up, and after a warm greeting they walked on together. It needed but a few words to shew Amy that Jane's mind was in a different frame from what it was when they last parted, and she could not help sighing as she thought how

quickly our best resolutions can be frittered away; she said nothing, but tried to feel interested in all Jane told her, knowing that sympathy must often be shewn on common subjects before it can be gained on the highest.

Jane told Amy of her visits to the Thomas's and the parties they were to give, and all the other gaieties of the village, and talked on till they reached the house. When they had taken off their bonnets it was tea-time. All tea-time Jane talked away very earnestly, but though she tried to appear cheerful and persuade herself she was so, Amy felt sure she did not really feel happy, and longed to know how she could comfort and help her.

After tea Jane said she must finish trimming her bonnet for the next day, and went to get it whilst Amy took out her work. She soon came back with some bright red ribbon in her hand; Amy, without being aware of it, fixed her eyes upon the ribbon, certainly without any look of admiration. Jane quickly noticed her glance, and said, "Well, Amy, what do you think of my ribbon: it is very pretty, is it not?"

"Yes, I dare say it is, Jane, to those that like the colour."

"Which means, of course, that you do not," said Jane: "I always notice that you like everything that is dowdy and old-fashioned looking."

"Do I, Jane? I was not aware of it;" and Amy smiled good-humouredly.

"And I really believe you think that I ought

never to wear anything that is pretty," Jane continued.

"No, Jane, I don't think that exactly."

"Well then, what do you think? I wish you would tell me," said Jane, half annoyed; "for my part I cannot see why we should not dress ourselves as smart as we like; gay colours cost no more than dowdy ones, and when you are buying a thing you may as well get the prettiest you can for the money; can you see any harm in that, Amy?"

"Dear Jane, I used to think just as you do, but I was taught to think differently, so I cannot say that I see no harm in it, but I know at first it is difficult to see why it is wrong."

"But what is the harm? I wish you would tell me."

"Well, Jane, when any one dresses smart what do they do it for?"

"To look well, I suppose."

"Then if we want to *look* well it must be for others to admire us, must it not?"

"I don't know, but perhaps it is."

"And does it really seem right to dress ourselves out to attract attention? is it being modest and retiring, as we are taught in Scripture a woman should be?"

"But I think people may dress without any desire to attract attention."

"Oh yes, dear Jane, I am sure they may, but then I cannot fancy they would choose gay bright colours, because those will attract attention."

"Then you think it wrong to take any trouble about your dress?"

"No, I think one ought always to take pains to be perfectly neat, but my idea is, if one does not dress to be admired, one would be just as neat when alone as when in company; and if any one when alone and with their own family can go about with an untidy gown, hair not neat, and shoes down at heel, as one so often sees; and when out walking or visiting dressed up smart, I cannot help thinking there must be some great fault, they must dress to be admired, not to be neat, although they may not allow it, or know it."

"But every one does dress smart now, one would look quite peculiar if one did not."

"Oh, Jane, I cannot think that; and if it is a bad custom, no matter how many do it, that does not make it right; besides, I cannot in the least agree with you about its looking peculiar. I remember dear Mrs. Leslie once saying, that she thought if people knew how much they were laughed at for dressing above their station, it would stop their doing it if no higher motive would; and don't you find, Jane, it has a bad effect in the school, and makes the children fond of dress?"

"Oh, I don't know," Jane answered rather shortly, for she remembered how uncomfortable she had felt at times, when, in questioning the children on the Catechism, she had to explain what the pomps and vanity of the world meant.

Amy at once saw that something had annoyed

her, and changed the conversation. Jane finished her bonnet, and sat with her head resting on her hand for some time without speaking, and then suddenly raising her head, she said, "Amy, if I were to be as particular as you are about everything I should never have any happiness at all."

Amy raised her eyes from her work, and said, very earnestly, "Are you sure you are happy now?"

"Yes, at least sometimes I am very happy."

"But then what comes after the happiness? Do you not often feel a weariness and distaste for every thing, your duties irksome, and your own heart dissatisfied?"

Jane did not answer for some moments, but when she did her voice changed, and she said very sadly, "Yes, Amy, it is so; I often feel so weary of the school and of everything, and long for some change and some excitement, and then I am glad to go out anywhere, or talk to any one, to drive off those unhappy feelings."

"It can only drive them off for a time," Amy answered, "for I am sure they must come back."

"Yes, they do, but how am I to get rid of them?"

"Dear Jane, Mr. Leslie once shewed me in a book the words, 'God made man's heart for Himself, and it is restless ever till it finds rest in Him.' I am sure the cause of all our restlessness and discontent is, that we strive to fill our hearts with things of earth, take them from their true Master, whose service is perfect rest and freedom, and give

other lords dominion over them; if we loved God above everything we *must* be happy."

"Oh, Amy, when I am with you I long to be better, and when you are away all my good thoughts go, and I feel that I never shall be good."

"Jane, remember that God's grace is sufficient for all; He will make the weakest strong, who trust in Him and pray to Him.

"Well Amy," said Jane very gravely, "then let us pray together again, for it seemed to help me last time."

How thankful Amy felt that this proposition came from Jane; it seemed to shew that there was a little ground gained, and earnestly did they pray together for strength to serve and love God above all things, and Jane felt happier than she had done for many days, as she lay down to rest that night.

Morning came, and the two friends got up early, that they might arrange everything in the school-room for the examination.

Jane felt almost a dislike to her smart bonnet as she put it on, and could have wished the day she had been looking forward to so long was at an end.

The school-room soon filled, and the examination began. Amy had found a quiet little corner for herself behind a desk, where she could sit unobserved and hear all. The children answered remarkably well, but there was a kind of eagerness and a wish to be heard which Amy did not like, and when examined in Scripture history they

answered in just the same tone in which they would have done had it been English history, and with quite as little reverence. They did not seem to think of it as a sacred history, to be read and studied reverently, but as a lesson they had to learn and be very quick in answering. It was painful to Amy to listen, and she was quite relieved when it was over. Many of the children were very smart, and had evidently in that followed their mistress's example.

To a common observer it would no doubt have appeared a very promising school, but to one who looked on the children as immortal souls to be trained for heaven, there was something almost painful in it.

The examination lasted about two hours, and when it was ended the inspector complimented Jane on the intelligence of the children, and so did many of those who were present. Amy watched her face, and could see a look of sadness as she thanked them for their kind remarks. Yes, Jane's conscience was beginning to tell her that she had not done all she should have done for those children.

The Thomas's and other of Jane's friends were there, and they wanted her to go and spend the evening with them, but for once she steadily refused, and when all had left the room turned with such comfort to Amy. "Oh, Amy, you must not go to-day," she said, "I cannot spare you, do stay till to-morrow."

"No, dear Jane, I cannot; you know I promised

Mrs. Wilson to return, and she was to walk to meet me; besides, Miss Ellis wants me to help her in the decorations for church and other things, so I must go, though I am sorry to leave you."

"Oh, Amy, when you go all my good thoughts go too, and I shall go on with my careless worldly life, feeling all the time how miserable and worthless it is."

"No, Jane, you must not, indeed you must not do that," Amy said almost imploringly.

"How am I to help it? I shall be asked to go here and go there, and people will be talking and laughing as if there was nothing else but this world to think of, and I shall have no one to speak a word of warning to me, and soon I shall be just like the rest."

"If you *really* wish to improve, Jane, you will; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? By ourselves we should never get on, but with God's help we shall, if we have an earnest desire to do right."

"Yes, Amy, that is all true, and I believe it, but I feel too sadly how it will be; you know when I spent that evening with you some little time ago, I felt determined to try, and yet I only tried for a few hours; the first temptation to pleasure that came I gave way, and all my good thoughts were gone."

"No, dear Jane, not quite gone, or you would not feel so anxious now; if I were you I would make a rule to myself to spend a little time every morning in quiet reading and prayer; I mean, of course, in

addition to your usual morning prayers ; and I think if you let nothing prevent your doing it, you would find it the greatest help ; it is thought best I believe to begin with a short time, and then increase in proportion as we find we can fix our attention."

" What would you advise me to read ?"

" A few verses in the Bible ; Mr. Leslie told me to read either from the second lesson for the day, or to take some chapters and read them in succession, as those in St. John, beginning with the thirteenth to the eighteenth."

" Thank you, dear Amy, I will try ; what a comfort Mr. Leslie must have been to you ; how you must miss him now !"

" Yes, I do, but he is so kind as to write to me from time to time, and he tells me to write to him at any time if I wish to ask any question or have anything explained ; he told Mr. Ellis when I came here that he must still consider himself as my pastor, and Mr. Ellis told me he hoped I should not feel that he had taken me away from Mr. Leslie's care ; but I must not stay and talk any more, shall we not before we part go into your room and pray together ?"

" Oh, yes, I should like it so much, Amy, I am very weak.

" We are all weak, dear Jane, but prayer will make us strong," Amy said, as they left the schoolroom and walked into Jane's room.

Again they knelt and prayed, and then rose up and parted, but as Amy wished Jane good-bye, she

opened a Bible that lay on the table and pointed to the words "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Jane kept the book in her hand as she looked after Amy. "Unto death," she said; "death! yes, death may soon come, and I, how could I meet it?"



CHAPTER XIV.

"Come Resignation, spirit meek,
And let me kiss thy placid cheek,
And read in thy pale eye serene
Their blessing who by faith can wean
Their hearts from sense, and learn to love
God only, and the joys above."

Christian Year.

When Amy and Mrs. Wilson met, according to their agreement, half way between Lignwood and Alfont, Mrs. Wilson told Amy that Mr. Ellis had called that morning wishing to see her, but finding she was not come home, had left a message to request her to go to the vicarage as soon as she could on her return.

Amy would have gone directly, but Mrs. Wilson insisted on her having something to eat after her walk, before she went. She had dined herself before setting out, but with her usual thoughtfulness Amy's dinner had been put in the little oven by the fire to be kept warm. When her dinner was over Amy walked to the vicarage. Mr. Ellis was engaged, but the servant asked her to go into Miss Ellis's room; she was busy as usual, and Amy begged to be allowed to go on with an unfinished frock she

saw on the table whilst she was waiting, a request Miss Ellis thankfully complied with, and they were soon in earnest conversation on the evening school, which had gone on very regularly, and they hoped satisfactorily.

"I am often afraid it is too much for you to come here after your day's teaching," Miss Ellis said, "you must tell me if you find it so."

Amy answered with such earnestness, Miss Ellis could not doubt the truth of her words, "Indeed, ma'am, I am very thankful to you and Mr. Ellis for allowing me to help in such a work; it is a great blessing to feel we can be of use to others."

"It is indeed, and that makes me think of your other pupil, how does she get on? Mary Carter, I mean."

"Oh, so fast, I am quite surprised; I often think she is a lesson of what an earnest will can do; she teaches me much more than I can ever teach her."

"Her daily life of calm resignation and child-like trust is indeed a lesson that ought to teach us much. I think she is one who has traced the finger of God in all that has happened to her, and can say from her heart, 'The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?' and that makes her so contented, and free from anxious thoughs."

A knock at the door as Miss Ellis finished speaking, summoned Amy to Mr. Ellis's study. He asked her to sit down, and then looking amongst his papers for a letter, he said, "I heard this morning from Mr. Leslie, he enclosed a note for you; but

before you read it he wished me to tell you the purport of his letter to me. I am afraid it will be a great trial to you to hear what he tells me:—we must make up our minds to part with him."

Amy said nothing, but her look of grief told more than any words would have done what she felt.

Mr. Ellis felt much for her; he knew her history, her lonely lot, and that Mr. Leslie had been as a father and guide of her youth, and that he who alone was left to her was now to be taken away: he sat down by her, and said gently, "It is a very great trial, but I know you will strive to be resigned; it is his Master who calls him, so we must not wish to hold him back; you will feel so, I am sure, when I tell you what he says." He read the letter, it told what we know before, and Amy did indeed appreciate the entire self-sacrifice. All thoughts of her own grief were for the time gone, and as Mr. Ellis finished the letter, she said in an under-tone, "The Lord's will be done." "Amen," he answered as softly, and for some moments they sat in silence, while each prayed inwardly, that should God thus call them to forsake all and follow Him, they might be as ready to do it. Then Mr. Ellis again took up the letter, and said, "But I must not forget to give you his message; he wishes you to spend the Christmas holidays at Elverton; he says he shall write to you about it, so your note no doubt will tell you all. We shall be sorry to lose you from our Christmas meetings, and I am afraid it will be a sad disappointment to the children, but Elverton has

certainly a first claim, and so pray make any arrangements you like. My sister and myself will do all that is wanted here."

Amy thanked him and rose up to go; her heart was very full and very sad, and she longed to be alone. She went home, and into her own little room at once, and after a few moments' prayer, opened Mr. Leslie's note. He alluded to his plans, and wished her to come immediately to Elverton, for he purposed leaving the day after the Epiphany. He spoke of the trial he knew his departure would be to her, and ended with "You may seem to be alone on earth, to be left of all, but, my child, remember, 'When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up:' and He has said, 'Fear thou not, for *I* am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.' One who rests in the Lord needs none other on whom to rest. And I can but feel that in removing from you all earthly stays and consolations, the Lord wills to draw you nearer to Himself. Human sympathy and guidance are very blessed if God give them, but if He withdraw them, it must be that for such it is more blessed to be without. Go on, then, calmly trusting in Him, resting on Him; have but one motive in everything, to do His will and wait His coming. Soon, very soon that hour will be here, quickly will this earthly scene pass away, and eternity burst upon us, and then, if only we can endure unto the end, we shall be called to rest for ever with the Lord. Struggle on then, my child, faint not, nor be weary.

The Lord bless you; to His protection I commend you."

Tears rolled down Amy's cheeks as she read the letter, and for some minutes they were not checked, and deep sighs, almost sobs, accompanied them. But the words, "faint not, nor be weary," sounded in her ear, and with a great effort she roused herself. She felt she must not sit still and mourn. The Lord sent the trial. He would strengthen her to bear it, and strength must be sought in prayer. She prayed and rose up, as all must be who drink of the waters of life, strengthened and refreshed. And when Mrs. Wilson came to her door to see after her, she was able in a calm voice to tell her what she had heard.

"And you will have to go to-morrow, my dear?" she asked; "oh, it will be a dull Christmas without you, but I am a selfish body to be thinking of myself; let me help you to get your things ready."

That was a task that was soon completed, and then Amy said she should much like to go and wish Mary Carter good bye. Mrs. Wilson, though quite fearing she would be over tired, did not like to oppose it, knowing the comfort these visits were to her good old friend, and Amy set off. It was as great a comfort to her to sit with Mary, as it was to Mary to have her with her. They had so much sympathy, and this evening she felt Mary's resignation would help her much to bear this fresh trial.

How the good old woman's face lighted up with pleasure, as Amy opened the door. "What you, dear child, at this time!" she said; "come in, and

God bless you; here, come to the fire and take your favourite little low chair; how glad I am to see you." She quickly saw Amy's heart was full, and listened with much interest to her sorrow.

"Oh, what a holy man," she said, as Amy told her of Mr. Leslie's self-devotion, "the Lord be with him and uphold him on his way; oh, dear child, you must not even in thought wish to hold him back from the Lord."

"No, Mary, I do not, at least I pray that I may not; but when he is gone, the last of those who have watched over me and brought me up will be gone, and you know, dear Mary, the lonely feeling of having none to love you, to feel an interest in you,—but oh, I am very wrong," she said, checking herself, "very ungrateful, I who have such kind friends, may God forgive me the repining thoughts."

"He will," Mary said solemnly, "He knows all; the God of the fatherless will watch over you; think of me, child, a poor forsaken creature as I thought myself, and yet He never forsook me, and when trouble seemed greatest He was hard at hand, and filled my almost broken heart with joy. And you are to go and see him again and your dear home?" she went on after a pause; "keep a good heart, it will be a sore trial, but have ever in your mind, 'not my will, but Thine be done,' and you will have strength. And now, dear, you must leave me, I do not like to part with you, but it is getting late: you have been a great blessing to me, you have cheered me many times in hours of pain, and

I, thank God, can ask Him for blessings on you in return, and His blessing will be with you, dear child, I know it; those that remember their Creator in their youth He will not forsake in age. And now, good bye; God give you a safe journey and bring you back in peace to us again; I shall think of you every day."

"Thank you, Mary, good bye, God bless you," was all Amy could say, and with a calm, though sad, heart she walked home.

When she awoke the next morning she could hardly believe it was not all a dream; "Am I really to go to Elverton to-day?" she asked herself. Oh, what joy would the thoughts of returning there have given her a few months ago, but now she could hardly keep off the tears as she dressed herself for her journey.

Good Mrs. Wilson was up and preparing her breakfast, and urging her to eat, and the boy was come for her carpet-bag, and telling her it was time to go, before Amy well knew what she was about. Mrs. Wilson kissed her again and again, and walked to the end of the garden, to look after her till she was out of sight, and then wiped the tears from her eyes as she walked back to the house. "Poor young thing," she said, "she has soon seen trouble, but the Bible tells us it is good to bear the yoke in our youth, and I am sure it seems good for her, she is so gentle and kind. Well, God bless her, and bring her safe back again. I should be quite lost without her."

Amy travelled on still feeling very *dream-like;* the train whirled along, one station after another was called out, and more than once she had to get out of the train and wait for another, but nothing seemed to rouse her, till towards evening as it was getting dusk, the train stopped again, and the well-known call, "Dalton road station," made her start. She was roused then and felt indeed that she was going *home* to Elverton once more. The coach was waiting, the civil coachman recognised her, and saw her comfortably seated, and in a few minutes they were off.

Oh, how long did the hour's drive seem, and yet as they drew near Elverton, and Amy could make out by the light of the lamps the different cottages, and each well-remembered spot, her heart beat so fast, she could almost have wished the coach to stop, that she might take breath and recover herself.

The coachman drew up. "You get down here, I think ma'am?" he said, opening the door; "no luggage but your carpet-bag, I believe?" and the coach drove on, leaving her standing at the well-known turning to the rectory garden.

"Dear, dear Amy, you are come!" and Wood, Mrs. Leslie's faithful, attached attendant, seized Amy's hand and kissed her many times. This meeting brought back so vividly all that happened since they parted, that neither could speak for some minutes.

They walked on together. The church bell was going for evening prayers, the lights glittered through

the windows, and Amy almost unconsciously took the path for church. "Let us go," she whispered.

"But you will be too tired," Wood said, "had you not better rest first?"

"Oh no," Amy answered, "no greater rest than that." And again she was walking along the gravel walk as she had done each evening for so many years of her life. All there seemed unchanged, but as the light within gleamed through the chancel window, it fell on the *two* marble crosses! Oh, did they not tell what change had come since last Amy's feet trod that well-remembered path.

It was Christmas Eve. The chancel glittered with the wreaths of holly and ivy. Over the east window was the text in bright red letters, "The days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Amy walked to her accustomed place and knelt in prayer, and ever and anon as she raised her eyes they rested on those words, and her heart felt soothed and calmed.

Could any words speak more truly of the Christian's hope and joy? The angel told the shepherds that he brought them "tidings of great joy;" the wise men "rejoiced with exceeding great joy;" the spirit of the blessed Virgin "rejoiced in God her Saviour." And should not Christians rejoice when their "Light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon" them? Should not the rising of that Sun dispel all the shades of earthly sorrow, that with free and calm hearts they may rejoice in the Lord and praise Him for His goodness? Amy felt

that it should be so, as she read those words. The mourning congregation felt it, whose hearts had been bowed down with grief, as they thought how soon they should see their pastor's "face no more;" all strove to banish earthly sorrows, and as the holy words were read, "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light," peace seemed to descend upon them.

The service was over. Amy left the church calm and happy; "that peace which the world cannot give" had been asked and given. Her own room was ready for her, and she went up to it at once.

After she had had some refreshment Mr. Leslie sent for her. Her heart throbbed as she drew near the study door. Every thing in that house recalled her who was gone, and seeing him more than all. She stopped for a moment before she knocked. Mr. Leslie was quite calm but looked very ill and much older, his voice trembled slightly as he greeted her with the words, "Peace be with you, my child." He did not speak at all of his own plans, nor allude to his leaving. He asked of herself first, and then after a half hour's quiet, solemn interview, he said, "and now I think you had better go to your own room; we have the midnight service as usual, and after that the Holy Communion, and we must try to banish all our earthly sorrows, that we may be ready to welcome our blessed Lord. I wish you to lie down and rest before the service, for you look very tired, and if the body is exhausted by fatigue,

the mind cannot exert itself as it would; try to sleep a little; it has been a trying day."

Amy retired to her own room, and though feeling most disinclined for sleep, she obeyed directly Mr. Leslie's injunction, and tried to compose her mind. It needed it, for it was full of thought and very weary: she lay down on her own little bed, and tried to soothe herself to sleep by repeating the words of the Christmas hymn,—

"Rejoice in God alway,
With powers rejoice on high,
Who now with glad array
Are gathering in the sky,
His cradle to attend,
And there all lowly bend."



CHAPTER XV.

"Parting, to meet no more! hard to the ear
But warm'd 'neath meditation's brooding wing,
Disclosing sweet and solemn thoughts, that here
We are but strangers, homeward journeying."

Thoughts in Past Years.

THE church clock tolled out the eleventh hour. Soon after some little groups and many solitary worshippers might have been seen wending their way to the house of God.

It was a bright starry night, and hearts were meditating on the shepherds' midnight watch; the angels' heavenly song; the lowly stable at Bethlehem; the virgin mother's adoring joy; the overwhelming mystery of God made man!

Amy had had an hour's refreshing sleep, and now rose to join that band of worshippers. Service was to begin at half-past eleven; many were assembled when she entered, but their pastor was there before them, kneeling at one corner of the altar steps, interceding for his flock, that flock that was so soon to know him no more. The service began with the litany, (which Mr. Leslie had the

bishop's sanction for using at that hour;) when it was ended he read from the 8th to the 15th verses of the 2nd chapter of St. Luke, and then from it spoke to them of the wonders they this night commemorated. In spirit he led them to the heights of Bethlehem, with the wondering shepherds: they seemed to see the glory shine from heaven, and hear the angelic signal, and almost join in the heavenly hymn, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men;" earnestly he exhorted them to be ready with the shepherds to go and see the great thing which is come to pass, to prepare their hearts to receive their Lord and Master, who would so soon in Holy Communion be born, as it were, again in their souls. He paused, and again all knelt in silent prayer.

The church clock tolled out the midnight hour. As it finished the whole congregation rose, and, as with one voice, burst forth the hymn of praise:—

"Hark, the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King."

The Communion service then commenced, and that ended, all returned in silence and thankfulness to their homes, feeling as they left the church, "this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Christmas was generally the happiest time of the year at Elverton, but now though it was a happy time it was not a merry one.

The children had spent a day at the rectory as

usual; Mr. Leslie had tried to make it as happy a day as formerly to them, and while the games were going on they were very merry. But when it was nearly time to leave, Mr. Leslie stood up as if he had something to say; then every sound was hushed, and many tearful eyes were fixed on him, as they thought how soon they should hear his voice no more. He spoke to them for a few minutes, reminding them of all he had taught them, whose children they were, and the inheritance that had been promised them, and earnestly entreated them to walk on along the narrow path to the end. "Soon, my dear children," he continued, "I shall see you no more." A burst of sobs interrupted him as he said the words, and seemed for a moment to overpower him; he stopped, and then said, "Let us then pray that we may all so live here, that we may hereafter live together for ever in heaven."

They all knelt, the sobs were stifled, and very earnestly did he pray, and the young hearts join with him that they might "fight the good fight," and "endure unto the end." He rose and gave them all solemnly his blessing; and then after a few moments' pause, each child came up separately to him; to each he said a few kind words, and gave a little book to be kept in remembrance of him. They lingered yet, unwilling to leave, but he rose and left, and they followed.

Amy, who was present, felt it all more deeply than the children; she made a strong effort to control herself till they were gone, but then, leaning her hand

on the table, she wept in the bitterness of her heart. For some time she sat there full of grief, all seeming dark and gloomy around her, but a voice saying, "My child, what is the matter?" roused her, and Mr. Leslie stood beside her.

"Oh, Sir, I beg your pardon," she said, trying to check her tears, "I did not know you were there; I am very very wrong, but I feel so unhappy, I cannot help it," and the tears burst forth again.

"Try to compose yourself, and then come to my study," he said, "I will wait for you there."

In a few minutes Amy knocked at the door. He told her to come in, and pointed to a chair for her to sit down, the same place where she had so many times sat when she came to him for religious instruction.

"You feel very unhappy to-day," he said kindly, but very gravely; "Why is it?"

"I do feel very unhappy," she answered; "I thought I was resigned to God's will, and could be satisfied with whatever He appointed, and now all my resignation seems gone, and I feel almost as if I were rebelling against God, and thinking He was dealing hardly with me; oh, I am very wicked."

"Do not despair because you cannot learn perfect resignation at once; it is a difficult lesson, and one that the devil will try hard to keep us from acquiring. Your *real* desire is to serve God, is it not?"

"Yes, Sir, I hope it is."

"Then when God sees that we have that desire, He tries us by some affliction, requires us to offer

up something to Him, as He did Abraham; we must not shrink back and in secret withhold what by offering up willingly He will accept as a free gift. That which He demands will often be what is most precious to us, the very thing we think we cannot part with; but then in proportion to the greatness of the sacrifice required, will be the greatness of the blessing we shall obtain, if with a willing though perhaps bleeding heart, we can say, 'Thy will be done.'"

Amy's fixed, earnest look, shewed her attention, though she said nothing; he went on:—

"It is a great help to bear in mind when our sorrows seem very heavy, how quickly all will pass away, how soon life itself will be over, and then what will it matter whether our lot here was joyful or sorrowful, whether we travelled the journey in solitude or in company? all that will matter is, how the journey was made, whether we ever kept the end in view. You are by God's providence placed where you may work for Him; *that* you have, I believe, learned to do, but now He calls you to a more difficult task, not to do, but to suffer. The Christian is not a true follower of his Lord till he has learnt to do either with equal willingness. You understand me, Amy, do you not, and you will try to remember this in all the troubles of life?"

"I will try indeed to do so," she answered; "thank you, Sir, it seems all clearer to me now, I trust I shall not be tempted again to feel so miserable."

"You will be tempted, no doubt, my dear child, but you will arm yourself against the temptation; remember the being tempted is no sin, we make it sin if we wilfully yield instead of struggling against it. And now," he said, after a few moments' pause, "tell me about your school and your children."

He listened with much interest whilst Amy told him of her plans, her hopes and her fears, the encouragements and the difficulties; and gave her wise and holy counsel. He was much pleased to hear of her visits to Mary Carter, and the other poor, and of Mr. and Miss Ellis' kindness to her.

"It is so necessary for the mind," he said, "to have some change of thought and occupation, and yet I should be sorry to think of your getting into the habit of visiting about amongst the people of the village; there is much that would be injurious to you in that, and the mind of one that has undertaken such a work as training God's little ones, ought to be kept as free as possible from worldly subjects; and if your influence is really to work for good on the children, you must be looked up to by them. You teach them the fear of God, and they must look up to you as to one who leads a holier life than that they see around them; but if a mistress is to be seen as soon as school is over, dressed up smart, setting off to spend a gossiping evening over the tea-table of some of her neighbours, I do not see how she will appear different to them from others, however well she may talk to them in school. Never forget that a consistent ex-

ample, proceeding from the desire to do all to the glory of God, will do more good than all that could be said on the subject of religion, and indeed without it I fear we do more harm than good by what we say, and none are quicker than children in detecting inconsistency."

As he spoke, the church bell began for evening service, and Amy rose to leave the room, for she knew Mr. Leslie always liked to be in church about a quarter of an hour before service; but before she left he prayed with her, and gave her his blessing, as was his custom, for he had little hope of his own words doing good if he did not ask God to bless them and make them sink into the heart.

The days to be spent at Elverton drew rapidly to a close.

Amy had visited all her old friends, and been joyfully welcomed. With many she was as great a favourite as with Mary Carter; but now the "last time" was fast approaching. Oh, how many sad thoughts do those words bring to one's mind! Why is it that things indifferent when done for the "last time" acquire an interest which they never had before, an almost mournful interest? Is it that having the seeds of immortality in our souls, they recoil from a "last time," having been first formed to know no end, but an eternity of happiness?

Mr. Leslie's time had been much occupied. There were many arrangements to be made, much to be thought of and settled. But in the midst of all apparent distractions his mind was calm, stayed on

God, in the thought of whose constant presence he habitually lived.

In the last week of his stay at Elverton, he had visited every cottage and house in his parish, and received many visits from those who wished to come once more to their beloved pastor, for that "ghostly counsel and advice" which had comforted and supported them in many a trying hour, by teaching them to cast all their care on Him who careth for all.

There was an outer door to his study with a closed porch, into which all came who wished to see their pastor. There was no need for them to wait till they could be announced by servants; they knocked at the door, he himself opened it immediately if he was in the room, if not, they pulled a bell which rang in the study, and summoned him if he was in the house. If he was out, (which seldom happened, as he fixed hours for being in which all knew,) one of the servants mentioned it, and told when he would be in. When Mrs. Leslie was living, she went to the study when the bell rang if she was in, as she thought she might be able to take any message for her husband better than the servants, and to wait on the poor she ever thought a privilege.

As Mr. Leslie was to leave early the day after the Epiphany, he fixed the evening service for that day at eight o'clock, that it might be his last meeting and parting with his parishioners. How wonderfully appropriate were the lessons for the day: the morning one, the Christmas Eve chapter, again recalled all the holy thoughts of resignation and trust

in God, and cheered all hearts with the blessed words of promise, "the Lord shall be thine everlasting Light." And in the evening, how did the gracious promises of salvation to the gentiles sustain his well-nigh fainting, but still unshrinking spirit, who was so soon to go forth a messenger to them; to "say to the prisoners, Go forth; to lead those in darkness to Him who waited to have mercy on them, to guide them to the springs of living water."

Before going to church for evening service, Mr. Leslie took leave of Amy, and of each of his servants separately. He wished to be quite alone for the last hours.

We will not dwell on these partings. Such trials are some of the bitterest drops in that cup of sorrow that our heavenly Father in His unerring wisdom has prepared to be drunk by all. Our blessed Master has drunk it first, let us not shrink back from it. Though it is bitter at first to the taste, He has made it sweet and refreshing afterwards.

The church was filled long before the hour of service. None who could by any means get there would have stayed away that night. And deep was the stillness, and breathless the attention, with which they seemed to drink in each word their pastor spoke.

The text Mr. Leslie chose, as he now for the last time addressed those who had been dear to him as children, was not one that could be made to bear any reference to himself, his ministry among them, or departure from them. He wished to impress once

more one of the most solemn truths of our holy religion on their minds; that when in after times they recalled this last meeting, the last warning he had given might rise up too, and stir them up to greater zeal in running the race set before them.

With a calm but mournful expression he looked round on them all, as he gave for his text the words, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." He spoke with all the solemn feelings with which a father on his death-bed would exhort his beloved children; and was listened to with the attention such an address would command. It is not intended to give an abstract of the sermon, but one extract, which seemed to have left a deep impression on all, we will give.

Near the end of his sermon, he said with a thrilling earnestness, "My brethren, my beloved brethren and children, the hour of our parting is come. Never, in all human probability, shall we meet again in this life. We part to follow different paths that will never lead into the same road; the streams of our lives will never flow again in the same channel. And yet in one sense we are all travelling the same road, all making the same journey, we are moving with a ceaseless rapidity along the road that leads to death. Death will soon come and soon be over: but death is not all, 'after death comes the judgment.' Then, brethren, then in that unspeakably awful hour, before the great white throne, and Him who sits on it, we shall all meet again. All, none will be left out, all, 'small and great,' will stand there

to be judged 'according to their works.' You and I shall stand there: I, to give account, oh, awful hour! of how I have fed and watched the flock of Christ, redeemed with His own blood. You to give account how the seed sown in your hearts has been nourished by prayer and watchfulness, what fruit it has brought forth. On the judgment then given will depend an eternity of happiness or misery. Then pastors and flocks, husbands and wives, parents and children, perhaps long parted, will meet again. Oh, woe unutterable, if they meet for that hour to part for all eternity! Brethren, it must not be so with us. It need not be. It cannot be, if only we are faithful unto death. Oh, watch and pray. Time is hastening on. It passes as a dream. But let us rouse ourselves, and shake off sleep, and struggle with full awakened powers to enter into our Master's kingdom."

He paused, many heads were bent in prayer, and fast falling tears would not let them rise again. He finished his sermon, and then proceeded to administer the Holy Communion. It was a fit time for its celebration. The strengthening and refreshing of the soul was much needed, and together they partook once more of the bread of life. As he gave to each the holy elements, from his inmost soul he prayed that body and soul might be preserved to everlasting life. The solemn blessing was given. All was over. The pastor had resigned his flock into his Master's hand from whom he had received the charge.

CHAPTER XVI.

"The God of glory walks His round,
From day to day, from year to year,
And warns us each with awful sound,
'No longer stand ye idle here!'"
Heber.

MANY months have elapsed since the events recorded in the last chapter.

Winter passed away. Spring, with its glad new birth, the earth's joyful awakening from its long, cold sleep, came, and brightened into warm, joyous summer. Summer, with its songs of birds and brilliant blossoms, faded into autumn, and again did winter come and lay its icy hand on all. In its hours of gloom the Church raised her glad voice, and told out to all lands the joyful tidings of a Saviour's birth. And again did winter snows melt before the soft sunny days of spring. And so the earth ran her ceaseless course, day succeeding night, as it had done ever since that day when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

There are no events to record of that time. It passed quietly away. There were few changes, one day seemed like the other. And yet what a work, for good or ill, must have been going on in that

time! And though no events marked its progress here, how many were being written in that book whose manifold history shall survive the decay of all earthly records, and exist when time itself shall have passed away, that one alone true and impartial history!

We often think how quickly time passes. One year after another finds us still in the same place, engaged in the same occupations, with perhaps the same faces around us. Nothing outward bears token of the flight of years. We seem where we were before. And yet we are not, we cannot be; we are either nearer to, or further from, that home which all desire to reach.

How was it with those whose history is being told in these pages? Had they advanced or retrograded in their journey to "the land which is very far off?"

Very unequal had been the pace with which those fellow pilgrims had travelled on towards the heavenly Jerusalem. Amy, whose face had been stedfastly set there, had journeyed on with steady steps, ever refreshing the wearied spirit with draughts of living water.

But Jane, poor Jane, how was it with her?

Alas! she too had set off, had gone a little distance, but soon wearied with its narrow path and thorny way, and looking back with longing eyes on the place she had left, she stopped, thinking she would rest a little while. But she remembered not that it is a journey that admits of no delay, no stop-

ping to rest, no looking back, but must be gone on with, "faint but pursuing," and when she waited she insensibly slipped back. And now the road looked narrower and more dreary than ever; the thorns and briers seemed to have grown higher and thicker than before, and to re-enter its strait gate a harder task than ever.

But another there was with whom we walked before,—where was he? Far had he advanced; his whole soul seemed panting after the vision of "the King in His beauty." To him the far-off land grew daily brighter and clearer. His ties to earth were loosened. He had nought to do but to labour in His master's vineyard, gather in souls to Him, and then wait his own summons home. He was treading on with rapid steps, taking "heaven by force." Such a one was Mr. Leslie in his desert home with his wild and savage flock.

On one more we will look. An aged pilgrim who was waiting her master's call to "depart in peace." Who in the midst of storms and tempest saw ever clear in the heavens "the bright and morning star," steered on her frail bark by its light, feeling no fear, but that it would guide her at last to "the haven where she would be." And thus in joy and peace lived Mary Carter.

On the afternoon of the day on which we resume our history, Mr. Ellis was returning from a long walk to a distant part of his parish, and as he passed the school he lingered without the open door, unseen, but watching the happy party within.

The children were all arranged in two semicircles round Amy, the little ones in front; all were busily employed working, and as Mr. Ellis passed, the pleasant sound of a hymn greeted him, Amy's clear, sweet voice, leading the little band. There was something very beautiful in the expression of her face, her work had fallen on her lap, her whole heart seemed in the words. Many little faces were turned up to hers, and fixed with a kind of reverence,—she saw them not, her hands were joined together, and sweet and touching was the earnestness with which she sung,

"We are travelling home to God
In the way the fathers trod,
They are happy now, and we
Soon their happiness shall see."

The hymn was finished, Amy's whole attention was again in the school, and a kind look bent on a little one who brought up her work to be examined.

Mr. Ellis turned away and walked on. He had had a trying morning, warning one who would not heed, and had felt cast down, but now he was refreshed and thankful. "Ah, my dear friend," he murmured to himself, "it was not the least of your labours, when you trained such a teacher, and none can say how greatly such teaching will work for good on generations to come." He returned home, and Amy, wholly unconscious that any other eye but the eye of God had been upon her, began to speak gently and lovingly to the children of the joys of that "home" they had been singing of.

The school was her one great interest. The children were all dear to her. Each one's disposition was studied, its faults watched, and that they might be overcome, made the subject of daily prayer. She knew that here was the work God had given her to do for Him, and her whole energies were bent upon it. The school was considered as a charge committed to her by God, and one for which she would have to render a strict account. The children felt her love for them and loved her in return, they looked on their mistress as a friend to whom they might go in any trouble. And many childish faults were told, and difficulties discussed, which enabled Amy to be of great use to them in their daily life. Could such a school and such a teacher be otherwise than a blessing to the whole parish? Oh, why are there not many such?

The clock struck five, the hour for school to close. The work was all put away, and the children arranged themselves quietly for prayers. Prayers ended, the happy troop dispersed with kind "good evenings" from their mistress, and in a few minutes Amy locked the school-room door, and walked across the churchyard to her pleasant home. She found tea ready for her as usual, and Mrs. Wilson's kind face and words to welcome her.

The weather was unusually warm for the end of May, and the distant roll of thunder had been heard at intervals during the day. The cottagers were sitting out in their little gardens, and the children stretched on the grass as if almost too weary to play.

Mr. Ellis and his sister followed the general example, and were sitting in the vicarage garden, when the hasty steps of some one going to the house made Mr. Ellis raise his eyes from his book. The troubled, anxious face of a boy, who pulled off his hat as he saw Mr. Ellis, made him move towards him, "Do you want me, my boy?" he asked.

"Oh, Sir, I came to ask you to please to come to our house," the child answered; "father's so ill, we think he's going to die," and tears ran down his cheeks.

Mr. Ellis went with him immediately, and heard from him that his father, who had been several miles from home at work, had been that evening brought home in a cart dangerously ill. When they reached the cottage, Mr. Ellis went at once up stairs, and found the poor man restlessly tossing from side to side on his bed, evidently in a high state of fever, and delirium coming on. He knew Mr. Ellis, but was too ill to take much notice. One of the neighbours had gone for the doctor, and Mr. Ellis staid with the poor wife, trying to calm her agitation, and speaking words of trust in Him in whose hands alone are the issues of life and death. From the poor woman he learnt that her husband had been ill several days, but thinking he should get better, and that it was only a cold he was suffering from, he would not let his wife be sent for, till becoming much worse he was frightened, and had begged the farmer for whom he was working to send him home.

When the doctor arrived, he at once pronounced it to be typhus fever, and did not conceal that he considered the man in a very dangerous state. He gave full directions as to what was to be done, and promised to call again the first thing in the morning. The poor woman's mother having arrived in the meantime, Mr. Ellis, thinking he could be of no further use that night, left, having first seen the children removed to a neighbour's house who kindly offered to take charge of them. The doctor left at the same time, and leading his horse he walked beside Mr. Ellis; he looked very grave and thoughtful.

"You think it a bad case?" Mr. Ellis asked.

"I certainly do," he answered.

"I would not wish to be desponding," Mr. Ellis continued, "but I must confess that fever here makes me uneasy; I have often been surprised that we have escaped so long, the malaria arising from those stagnant pools is enough to cause fever at any time I should think."

"It is indeed; oh, what short-sighted policy it was in the landowners to oppose their being filled up; I fear they will rue the time when their misplaced economy carried the day. But we must hope for the best. I trust you will take care of yourself, we should not needlessly run risks."

"Certainly not, and I will use what precautions I can, but neither your office nor mine is one that will allow of shrinking back from dread of infection, and I am thankful to say I never fear it."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, that is in

itself a great safeguard. And now I must wish you good evening, for I have another visit to pay and must hurry on."

He mounted his horse and rode quickly away. Mr. Ellis walked quietly home, thinking how soon their happy village might be turned into a "house of mourning." He said nothing to his sister of his fears, for he would not make her anxious, but he had a strange foreboding that sorrow was at hand.

A week passed, and no additional cause for uneasiness occurred; the poor man was a little better, and the doctor had more hope of his recovery. But then another case appeared, and from that time the fever seemed to rage like a fire. From house to house its pestilential breath spread, till there was hardly a cottage where there was not one ill.

For a short time the schools went on as usual. But then the danger of infection from so many being shut up in one room, made Mr. Ellis decide on closing them for a time.

Many of the children were ill, and Amy's hours were now spent in visiting and nursing the sick. Her influence over her pupils was now more apparent than ever. The most nauseous medicine was taken directly she desired it. The poor astonished mothers who had no authority, wondered by what charm this implicit obedience was obtained. The children longed for her visits, and her kind soothing voice would calm the fretfulness which suffering had brought on. Often they would ask her to sing to them, and in a low tone her voice might be heard

singing one of their well-remembered hymns, that spoke of the trials of this life and the joys of heaven, words familiar to them, but whose full meaning the hour of sorrow alone could teach.

Mr. Ellis' forebodings were now fully realized. The village was indeed turned into a house of mourning, and great was the suffering and distress. In one or two instances a whole family had been seized at the same time, and lay each one in solitary suffering, unable to help the other. To procure nurses for all was impossible. And Amy would go from house to house, relieving and assisting the poor sufferers in every way she could; helping to make the beds; preparing what little food they could take; and ever bringing a ray of comfort by her look of sympathy and words of kindness.

Early and late she was among them. She seemed to bear a charmed life, for though so continually within its influence, the fever did not lay its withering grasp on her. Mr. and Miss Ellis often urged her to take more rest, but she could not; to know the misery there was around her, and not do her utmost to relieve it, would have been distress rather than rest to her. And when Mrs. Wilson would look anxiously at her, as she came in pale and exhausted, to take hastily a little necessary refreshment, and say, "You'll kill yourself in the end, my child," she would answer calmly, almost with a smile, but a smile that nearly brought the tears into Mrs. Wilson's eyes, "And where would you find a life that could be more easily spared than mine? I

am alone in the world. I would not needlessly run into danger, I should think it very wrong, but it seems to me that those who have no earthly ties are especially called to devote themselves to help all who are in sorrow and suffering."

Very blessed to her were those hours of watching by the beds of the sick and dying. Holy and strengthening were the Communions partaken of with them. And many were the hearts that were softened by the words of truth, that came so naturally from her lips, and seemed so real because her daily life bore witness to their importance.

Mr. Ellis had drawn up little forms of prayer to be said at different hours of the day, at the houses of the sick, by those who were able to use them. And Amy would pass from one house to another, to read and pray with those who were unable from weakness to guide their thoughts to pray alone. She and Miss Ellis often met on their errands of mercy, and felt drawn more to each other by sharing in the same "work and labour of love." And the few words that passed between them of hope and trust cheered them on.

"I was sick and ye visited Me," was Amy's watchword, and sustained her through the dreary hours of many nights, when she would sit up alone in the small crowded cottage, with its oppressive atmosphere, administering with unwearying care and tenderness all the prescribed remedies; bathing the burning, throbbing temples; moistening the parched lips. The moon and the stars would look down upon

her, and seem to speak of that unwearied watch, which "the eyes that are in every place" maintain over all, and remove all her natural feelings of fear and nervousness. He for whose sake these His suffering members were dear to her, was with her in the lonely night-watches, and what other comfort or help could she need? His presence can "make the darkness as clear as the light," and change the hot burning breath of fever into "a moist whistling wind."

Blessed, most blessed, is the trying hour that teaches us not by the hearing of the ear, but by heartfelt experience, that "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble."



CHAPTER XVII.

"There is joy in heaven!
There is joy in heaven!
When the sheep that went astray
Turns again to virtue's way.
When the soul by grace subdued,
Sobs its prayer of gratitude,
Then is there joy in heaven!"

Heber.

For six weeks the fever raged. Six long weeks of sorrow, suffering and sickness; but six very blessed weeks to many who had not despised the chastening of the Lord, and who were now raised again from what had seemed the bed of death, with the earnest desire to serve Him in a far different way from what they had hitherto done.

The destroying angel seemed at last to stay his hand. The funeral bell began to cease to toll. The number for whom the Church's daily prayers were asked diminished. Feeble and tottering steps bore grateful hearts to the house of God, "to offer up their praises and thanksgivings for His late mercies vouchsafed unto them."

Amy began now to feel all she had gone through. Whilst there had been hourly cause for exertion,

she had so forgotten herself, that she hardly knew she was fatigued till a pause came, and then her strength seemed to fail her suddenly, and she was thankful for the hours of rest she could take without uneasiness. The doctor strongly recommended that the school should not be opened for at least a month, so she had full leisure to repose and regain her strength.

Miss Ellis used often to persuade her to come to the vicarage and sit with her in her cheerful sitting room, or under the pleasant shade of the old elm trees in the garden; and soothing and refreshing were these days of calm, after the late great storm; and much were they needed to recruit the wearied frames. But Amy would not have wished them to last. Now that they were appointed for her, she felt it her duty to use them for what they were designed,—to gain strength to resume her duties,—but she would have dreaded these days of ease for any other purpose, lest they should make her sink into indolence. It was well they came now, for a fresh call for exertion was soon to be made.

The fever had spread to some of the neighbouring parishes, though in none had it raged as it had in Lignwood. Alfont amongst others had been attacked by it.

It was some months since Amy had been there. During the weeks the fever was at its height, her whole time was engaged attending to the sick and dying, and now had she desired it, she hardly felt

strong enough to take such a walk. But indeed, for some time before, Jane and Amy had met much less frequently than formerly. Now that poor Jane's good resolutions had passed away, and she was again taken up with this world's amusements and frivolities, Amy's presence felt almost a reproach to her, for unwillingly it recalled all her past good intentions, and when they were together a veil seemed to have dropped between them, for both felt, when talking, they were repressing what each other was most interested in, and the thoughts of the heart were not expressed. Such intercourse could not have any great charm for either, and it gradually became less and less. It made Amy very sad to feel they were so estranged, but she knew it would be useless to say anything to Jane at present. She did what was far better, she prayed daily for her, and trusted that, in His own good time, God would open her eyes to see the things that belonged unto her peace.

One afternoon at the time of which we are speaking, when Miss Ellis had asked Amy and Mrs. Wilson (for she did not like to part them always) to spend a few hours with her, and was reading to them while they worked, a boy from Alfont brought a note for Amy, and said he was to wait for an answer. Amy opened and read it, it was soon done. It was a few hurried lines from Jane, written with a trembling hand, begging Amy earnestly to come to her at once, saying, she felt ill and wretched.

For a moment Amy's heart sunk at this fresh

demand on her nearly exhausted strength, but it was but for a moment. Self was soon forgotten,—Jane was in trouble,—perhaps now the answer to her prayers was coming. Her mind was made up; "I must go at once to Alfont," she said.

"To Alfont!" Mrs. Wilson and Miss Ellis both exclaimed, "it is impossible, you are quite unfit for such a walk."

"I ought to go I am sure," Amy answered sadly, "Jane is ill and begs me to go to her." For a few moments Miss Ellis and Mrs. Wilson tried to dissuade her, fearing the effect it would have upon her; but when they saw that she evidently thought it her duty to go they said no more, but Miss Ellis could not let her walk, so she ordered her pony for her to ride on, and said a boy should go with her to bring it back, should she wish to stay the night.

Amy thought from Jane's note that it was very unlikely she should return at once, so putting up what few things she would require, she took them with her and set off, Mrs. Wilson walking beside her part of the way. She gave her many charges to take care of herself, and looked after her with great anxiety when she parted with her. Amy was as dear to her as her own child, and she could hardly reconcile herself to her running such risks, though her having been so wonderfully preserved hitherto made her reproach herself for her want of trust.

When Amy reached Alfont she found Jane anxiously watching for her. She came to the door to meet her and eagerly seized her hand, but said no-

thing till she had led her into her room and shut the door. Then with a sad hollow tone, she said, "You are come to me, Amy, *you* are not afraid, you who have almost worn yourself out already with nursing. And oh, how ill you look!" she said, suddenly looking Amy in the face, and then went on hurriedly, "it was very selfish of me to send, but I could not help it. Oh, Amy, how wretched I am. I am very ill. I feel the fever is coming. I know it is. I shall die, and I dread death, I cannot die yet," and she got up and paced up and down the room.

Amy went to her and tried by kind and gentle words to soothe her; there was something almost fearful in that restless look of mental agony. But Jane could not be comforted.

"Stop, Amy," she said, as Amy tried to turn her thoughts to Him who alone could give relief, "wait till you know all before you think I can find comfort. Oh, why did I not listen to you before; it is too late now. I have turned my heart from God when He called, and now I feel that I may call, but He will not hear."

Amy began to speak again, but again Jane stopped her.

"It is of no use," she said in a tone of utter despondency, "I see it all plainly now. I have given my heart to the world. God asked for it, I felt Him ask, and I thought I would give it Him; but the world asked it too, and I gave it the world; and now the words ring in my ears, 'Ye shall seek Me,

but ye shall not find Me.'" "Last night," she went on in a hoarse, eager tone, "they sent for me to go and see a poor girl who was in the school for a few months after I came, and was now brought home with the fever. Her younger sister is in your school, and told her that you came to her when she was ill, and comforted her, and so she sent for me. I went. The fear of death was there too. I shall never forget her anxious look as I came in. Her mind had been wandering, but she was quite herself now. She was watching for me, her eyes fixed on the door as if expecting I should bring relief. I sat down by her and tried to speak, but no words would come. I had not put my trust in God, and how could I tell others to seek Him. And this poor girl, I knew she had been wandering in the ways of sin, and living the careless life of one who says there is no God. What could I say? Her mother was there, and she said almost bitterly, 'Can you say nothing to comfort her? Is all your fine learning of no use, except for this world?' I offered to read to her, and took up the Bible, but the first words I saw said it was impossible for those who had once tasted the heavenly gift to be renewed again to repentance, for they crucified the Son of God afresh; it seemed as if I had never seen those words before, and that now they were written in letters of fire. I could not go on, I threw down the book on the bed and started up. The poor girl looked at me and trembled; her mother drew me quickly away, and said with mournful bitterness,

'Is that all the comfort you can bring? She was a good child till her last few months at school, then she learnt to love fine clothes, and fine clothes led on to gay company, and that led on to worse, and now she is come home to die without hope. Do you never teach that the fear of God is worth all other knowledge?' She sat down and covered her face with her hands and sobbed aloud. Each word pierced my soul, it seemed to fall like lead on my heart, I felt it was all deserved. I did not answer. I could not. But I turned home with a crushed spirit. And from that hour I felt the fever had struck me. And now, Amy, I am going to die." She had paced the room all the time she was speaking, but now she sat down opposite Amy with a look of utter hopelessness.

Amy took her hand and said gently, "Dear Jane, remember who it is who says, 'Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent:' do not slight the loving-kindness of God, by thinking He will not hear you. Have you forgotten His many words of mercy? 'Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.' And 'Turn ye unto Me, and I will turn unto you.' Oh, Jane, it is the evil one who would tempt to despair, do not listen to him, but try to remember the wonderful love of God, and then you will mourn from love of Him that you have turned away when He called, and He will receive you as the father received his prodigal child."

Whilst Jane had been speaking, the thought of

the unwearying love of the good Shepherd for His sheep was in Amy's mind. There was one who would not hear His gentle voice calling her by name to come to Him, and now lest He should lose her altogether, He had let the storms and terrors of the wilderness sweep over her, that frightened, she might turn to seek for shelter, and be once more safely led within the fold.

She saw Jane was too excited to be able to think much to-night, and that quiet was necessary for her, and she said little more, but tried to soothe her; and having prudently brought with her a draught that the doctor had desired her to administer at Lignwood directly any signs of the fever appeared, she persuaded Jane to take it, and then prevailed on her to go to bed.

She dismissed the boy and the pony with many thanks to Miss Ellis, and a message to Mrs. Wilson, to say she did not expect to be able to return for some days, and once more took her place as nurse beside the bed of sickness.

The doctor arrived before long, and quite approved of all Amy had done, and left her with the injunction to lie down and sleep as much as possible, as Jane would not be likely to need much attention that night.

Amy followed his advice in lying down, but she could not sleep; her mind was too full of thought to allow it; and many were the prayers poured forth that night for her friend, that this sickness of the body might be the means of healing the soul of

the deadly sickness of spiritual sloth and worldliness.

For many days Jane lay hovering between life and death, she was frequently delirious, and Amy's heart ached to hear the mournful expressions of despair she would utter, and to see the look of agony her features wore. Her thoughts were often in the sick room of the poor girl she had visited, and she would reproach herself as the cause of all her sin and carelessness.

Often, as Amy watched beside her, she would sink almost insensibly on her knees, and pray that God would comfort her; and though Jane hardly understood what she was doing, the attitude seemed to help to recal her wandering mind, and she would look less wretched. It was a weary, anxious watching, but Amy felt it was needed, or she knew it would not have been sent; and what is any present suffering if it turns us from a road that leads to destruction?

In her hours of consciousness, Jane, though she spoke but little, always asked Amy to pray, and this gave Amy great comfort and hope.

Mr. Edwards, the rector of the parish, was gone from home for some weeks, and a clergyman from a distance came over for the Sundays, so Amy thought she could not be doing wrong in sending to ask Mr. Ellis to come and see Jane. He wrote at once to Mr. Edwards, and got his permission to attend her, and his visits were a great comfort to Amy, and she trusted in time would be so to Jane too, but now

she was too weak, and seemed too depressed to find comfort.

Miss Ellis and Mrs. Wilson often came to see Amy; and they insisted on her having a nurse to sit up with her alternately at night.

The neighbours seemed all panic struck by the fearful ravages the fever had made at Lignwood, and though they often came to enquire how Jane was, they never ventured within the house. Any one who was not supported by firm trust in God, would have sunk under this long, and often lonely watching, but His strength is sufficient.

At last the fever was subdued, but it left Jane in a most exhausted state, and the doctor thought it very probable she would not have strength to recover.

From the beginning she had made up her mind that she should die.

By degrees the fear of death had lessened; despair had given way before the holy hope and consolation the word of God holds out to all penitent sinners.

Life was altogether changed to Jane's imagination; it was no longer a scene of gaiety and exciting pleasure, but a thorny wilderness, through which it was a hard matter to pass uninjured; and with this view of it arose a longing to depart and end the struggle. Perhaps the languor and weakness of the body increased this desire; but there it was, strong and deep, the only wish she now had.

It was so blessed to feel at peace with God, so

soothing to think the weary strife was over, that Jane quite repulsed the idea that she might recover, when Mr. Ellis or Amy suggested it to her.

But poor weary child of earth, she was not yet to lie down in peace and take her rest. Her fight was but begun. The victory was not won.

Slowly but surely strength returned. She shut her eyes to the truth as long as she could, but the delusion would not last; she must begin life again, return to its daily round of duties and trials.

One lovely evening Amy and the nurse had moved her to a sofa, and wheeled the sofa to the open window; it was a calm summer's evening, Amy sat on the low window-seat, leaning back, her eyes fixed on the refreshing view, her heart adoring Him who had made it all. She was roused by a deep sigh from Jane, and looking up she saw the tears running down her face. "What is the matter, dear Jane?" she said, moving towards her, and taking her hand.

For some minutes Jane did not answer; at last she said, "I was thinking what a beautiful world this is, and yet what a weary world we make it to ourselves." There she stopped, and after a few moments' pause went on, "And then Amy I did so long that I could rest in the quiet churchyard, and not return again to all its snares and temptations. Oh, I do so long to die!"

"Dear Jane," Amy said, with a soothing gentle voice, "I do not think you ought to have this longing to die. If we really love God we shall leave

ourselves in His hand, and feel no anxious cares; we shall be willing to live or to die, as He sees best for us. That longing to die, is it not in reality choosing your own will instead of God's? The soldier who fights for his master's glory will not turn aside when a difficult post is assigned him, nor shrink back when enemies are at hand and must be overcome."

"If I thought I should overcome, I should not shrink so from the struggle; but, Amy, if I should again be overcome, what a hopeless state mine would be."

As Jane spoke, Amy heard Mr. Ellis's footsteps coming to the house; she was very glad, for she longed for him to talk to Jane. She told her he was coming, and begged her to let her tell him what they were speaking of, that he might be able to give her the counsel she needed. She knew that in Jane's weak state the exertion of overcoming her nervousness enough to tell Mr. Ellis what fears disturbed her, would be so great, that most probably she would not have resolution to do it; so hardly waiting for her answer, she went down to meet him, and told him in as few words as she could the state of anxious distress Jane was in.

He understood her directly and thanked her for telling him; "Now with God's grace I may hope to help her," he said; "it is a very natural state for her to be in, but it is a very difficult one to deal with. It will be difficult to rouse her from this despondency, to take a proper interest in her worldly

duties, without awakening again that love of the world which has been such a fearful snare to her."

Amy took him up stairs and then left the room. For a minute or two he said nothing. His bible was in his hand, his eyes rested on some words, his heart prayed over them. Jane's face had that look of sadness that had now become habitual to it.

Mr. Ellis turned towards her and said, "Life seems very different to you now that you have been near the dark river that all must pass?"

"It does indeed," she answered.

"What has made the change do you think?" he asked. "All things go on as they did, though you can hardly believe the world you look on is the same you saw last in your days of health and strength; but it is the same, and to others it seems unchanged. The change is in yourself. It is that your blessed Lord has knocked at your heart, and at last you have opened the door and let Him in, and now you feel what every real Christian must feel, that He alone can fill it, and your great fear is, lest He should depart. Is it not so?"

Jane could not speak, but he saw that she assented and listened earnestly.

He paused a moment and then went on, "When our dear Lord was about to leave His beloved disciples orphans and alone, exposed to shame and suffering, He did not pray His heavenly Father that they should be taken out of the world, but only that they should be kept from the evil. He knew that a higher glory awaited those who endured afflictions

for His sake, and so, though they watched with stedfast longing gaze His departure from them to His throne in heaven, He left them still here, and strengthened them till they rejoiced to suffer shame for His sake. Did He not know what was best for them? would they have stedfastly endured all the cruel mockings and scourgings, if they had had a longing desire to escape from them? No, they were willing to depart or abide, as their Master saw best for them; and such must be always our will, if we would be followers of Him and them."

He paused again, fearing he should tire her, but she raised her head as if to ask him to go on, and he continued, "When St. Paul, the great example for all penitents, was converted, did he ask his Lord to take him at once to his rest that he might escape suffering? his words were, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to *do?*' and when He knew his Master's will, how gladly and unweariedly he did it. And so if you would shew forth your love to our dear Lord, who has again so mercifully called you, it must be done by resigning yourself into His hands; wishing for nothing, but that you may know and do His will, and spend your life to His glory. And now, I must not say more, for you will feel tired," he said, "but I will pray with you, and that will do more than any words." He knelt beside her, and when his prayer was ended, rose, and gave her his blessing, and as he wished her good bye, he said earnestly, "Pray that your own will may be lost in the one burning desire to love God above all

things; do not allow yourself any anxious fears for the future; cling to God for strength, as the child clings to its mother's arm, and strength will surely come each day as you need it; you must not doubt it."

A new light seemed to dawn on Jane as he left her; had she then been choosing her own ways? was this longing to depart self-pleasing? She felt it must be so. But she prayed it might be so no more. Mr. Ellis' words came to her mind, "strength will surely come." Fresh hopes sprung up, she might yet serve God, if it was His will she should live longer.

She looked out again, tired and weak, on the lovely world around, but tears no longer flowed down her cheeks; and when Amy came in, she smiled, and said, "Amy, the world does not look so sad to me now as it did an hour ago."



CHAPTER XVIII.

"The hours of pain have yielded good,
Which prosp'rous days refused;
As herbs, though scentless when entire,
Spread fragrance when they're bruised.

The oak strikes deeper, as its boughs
By furious blasts are driven;
So life's vicissitudes the more
Have fixed my heart in heaven."

R. P.

We do not burst in an instant from midnight darkness into noonday light. The tree left bare by winter storms does not in an hour put forth its leaves and blossoms. There are the gradual changes, the slow increase, before the sun gains its mid-day height, or the trees and blossoms come forth in their luxuriant beauty. And thus is it generally with the inner life of the soul, of which life and growth in nature is an analogy. Thus was it also with Jane; she did not at once change from what she had been to the perfect Christian, but the blessed work was begun, and, nourished by earnest prayers and daily efforts, the seed sown sprung up and grew.

She regained her strength very slowly, and when apparently well was so weak, that resuming her duties at the school was quite out of the question.

She had tried it at Mr. Ellis' desire, for he feared her giving way to the wish she evidently had to leave Alfont altogether. He told her to wait in patience, and choose nothing; if God designed her to work on there, she would be doing wrong in leaving, though it might seem that elsewhere she would have greater spiritual advantages. If she waited God's will, He would shew her the way wherein she should walk. And so it was, for her weakness obliged her to resign the school, and then Amy begged her to come and stay with her, Mrs. Wilson having gladly given her permission to make that arrangement.

There was nothing that Jane would have liked so much, nor anything that was calculated to be of greater help to her, than daily intercourse with Amy, whose gentle even cheerfulness was just suited to comfort the weak-hearted.

Mr. Ellis and his sister too were very kind, and these were some of the happiest days of Jane's life.

A pleasant little party they were in the long summer evenings. Jane used to watch for the first sight of Amy's dark dress, across the churchyard, after evening school, and walk to meet her, and often they moved a little table out into the garden, and took their simple evening meal under the shade of an old walnut-tree. And how often afterwards did Jane and Amy's voices blend in sweet harmony, in singing some of their favourite hymns. And then the happy walks through the woods and fields; the solemn peace that seemed to rest on all.

Yes, those were happy days! did we not look forward to a brighter, that shall not need the light of the sun to shine in it, we might be tempted to mourn that we cannot stay the flight of such days, but that they, like all other things of earth, must pass away. But looking forward to the blessed dawn of the everlasting morning, shall we ever repine that we are hastening on to the end of all things? If our treasure is laid up aright, shall we not rather rejoice as year by year it draws nearer to us?

Regularly once a week Amy went to Furze Bank. Jane had learnt to love and esteem dear old Mary Carter, and always took pleasure in the visits to her, but she used to leave the cottage generally after she had been there a few minutes, and sit on the grass outside, that Mary might enjoy uninterrupted the conversations with Amy which she so much prized. The reading lessons had succeeded so well, that now Mary could spend many of her lonely hours in the study of her Bible; and deeply did she value this privilege.

During the hours Amy was at the school, Jane generally sat alone, with a book or work in her hand, but her eyes often not upon it, and her thoughts on other things. Mr. Ellis was anxious she should begin to employ herself regularly, for he feared continual thought which did not lead to action would produce a morbid state of feeling, and make steady, daily work irksome to her.

One evening after school he staid till the children

were all gone, and proposed to Amy that Jane should come to help for a few hours in the school every day. Amy quite entered into his reasons for wishing it when he told them to her, and gladly undertook to arrange it with Jane.

In their evening walk that day she told her what Mr. Ellis had proposed. Jane did not feel at all inclined to recommence teaching. Weakness had bought on a sort of indolent dislike to exertion, especially to beginning anything new; besides, her whole past life was now so distasteful, that doing anything that seemed to take her back to it again, as teaching would, was almost painful to her. But she was *now* in earnest in her desire to serve God, so when Amy told her Mr. Ellis' reasons for wishing her to employ herself more, she agreed directly, and the next morning went with Amy to the school.

Jane felt at once the difference there was in the schools at Lignwood and Alfont. It was not that here the children were quicker, though they were very intelligent and advanced, but in their whole tone and manner, Amy's holy purpose and motive to work for God's glory alone, seemed, if we may so say, to have *leavened* the school. The children were earnest, respectful, and attentive. There was no need for incessant watching. Amy acted so entirely on principle herself, that by degrees the same spirit was infused into the children. What may not one earnest purpose, one life devoted to God's service do!

What was the secret of Amy's good management

and influence? Let Mr. Leslie's rules answer. She always prayed for herself and for her children. She would as soon have expected the school to prosper without prayer, as she would have looked for the children to learn without instruction. And any teaching, however good it may appear, begun without this only true foundation, will assuredly share the destruction of the house built on the sand. When the storms of worldly troubles and the waves of affliction beat upon it, its hollowness and unprofitableness will be discovered, and we shall see the folly and misery of cultivating the mind, while the soul, the undying soul, has been left untaught.

The hours spent with Amy at the school were of great use to Jane. They shewed her where her own faults had been, and she tried to learn to work in that spirit in which Amy did.

Many were the happy conversations they had in their pleasant evening walks, or when sitting on the grass watching the beautiful sunsets.

Jane used to wonder how every thing seemed to have two meanings to Amy. The setting sun to speak of the decline of life; the rising, of the rising of that sun that will never set; the daily unfolding of the leaves and flowers, of the growth of the seeds of grace sown in the soul. Amy would read to her passages from "the Christian Year," which she so often carried in her hand when walking, and tell her that little book had taught it her.

Poor Jane, this was the seed-time for her. Life was so calmly happy now, so different from what it

had ever been before; and she felt as if there was no fear of this happiness passing away. And no fear there was, if it drew her nearer to God. When happiness makes the thought of God more precious to the soul, then it is safe; but if it so fills the heart that there is no room left for the remembrance of God, then it is most dangerous. Jane's happiness was safe now, for her pleasure was in one who was so filled with the love of God, that she ever led others on to seek their joy in Him too.

Some weeks of this happy life passed away. It was a time full of comfort to all. The gratitude and love that Amy's unwearied exertions had drawn forth, gave her such interest with the parents, that whatever she suggested for the good of the children they tried to adopt and carry on, and they were much improved in many ways, which was a cause of great thankfulness to her.

Mrs. Wilson too, full of kindness and benevolence, took great pleasure in the happiness of the two friends. And Amy never forgot, in her care of Jane, to shew Mrs. Wilson all her usual attention and respect.

Jane gained daily both bodily and mental strength, but each day that she was with Amy, did the sense of her own deficiencies and neglect in her school deepen upon her, and make her almost shrink from again undertaking the responsibility of one.

One afternoon when Amy was at the school, and Jane sitting alone, for Mrs. Wilson was gone out, Mr. Ellis called. After a few minutes' conversation,

he asked Jane when she thought she should be strong enough to look out for another situation. Jane hardly knew what to say, and gave an undecided answer.

"I hope you do not feel less interested in teaching than formerly," he said.

"Oh no, Sir," she answered, "I think it is more interesting to me than it ever was."

"Then why do you hesitate about recommencing?" he asked, though he partly guessed her thoughts.

Jane hesitated a moment, and then said very quietly, "Teaching seems to me now such a great responsibility, I think I am quite unfit for it."

"Perhaps you are more fit for it now than you ever were. When are we really safest, when we walk to the brink of a precipice and are unconscious of it, or when we see our danger and try to avoid it? Is not that your case? You were indeed on the brink of a precipice, and in danger of pulling others down into it after you, but now that you are aware of its fearful depth, you are much safer than you were when it was unheeded. You understand me, do you not?"

"Yes, Sir, I do; but oh, I am afraid I may again forget the dangers I shall meet with."

"You will not if you use the right means of remembering them, prayer and watchfulness; I think you are right though, in not wishing to begin again just yet. It will be better for you to be here a little longer. You find it a great help, I dare say?"

"I do indeed, Sir, I can never say all that Amy has been to me. May God reward her. It is quite a lesson to go into the school, if it were only to sit down and watch her, and see the influence she has with the children. I cannot think how she has gained it."

"I can tell you, I think: If you were wandering in an unknown country in a dark night, which would best help to lead you right; if some one gave you directions for your road, or if they held out a light, and said, 'Follow me, I will go before and carry this light, and shew you the way?' That is what Amy does, she does not *say* only to the children, it is right to do so and so, but she *does* it herself, and so holds out the light for them to follow. All she does is done from the one motive of serving God, and till we learn that great lesson, 'do all to the glory of God,' our greatest works will be useless, and worse than useless."

He rose up to go; Jane sat thinking of all he had said. "How useless and worse than useless," did her whole past life now appear to her. She had set out on a wrong path, and no wonder it did not lead to the right end. Truly, all have set out on a wrong path, who work for any end short of doing glory to God; and however great and fair their works may appear; however men may praise them, and wonder at their energy and skill, it is all nought, and shall perish and come to nought, in that awful day, when the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. They have had their reward, the

reward they laboured for; have got on in the world; been esteemed by their fellow-creatures; had the praise of men. Are they hardly dealt with, if they are paid the wages they laboured for, and that which they took no pains to gain is withheld?

Jane sat thinking on these things, and inwardly praying that she might henceforth labour for everlasting wages, till Mrs. Wilson came in and roused her.

"Is not Amy come home yet?" she asked, "it is later than usual." Jane looked at the clock, and saw that it was half an hour after the time she generally came in, so she put on her bonnet, and said she would go to the school and see for her.

She found the school-room empty; but she had discovered it was Amy's custom to retire, for a few minutes' prayer, into the class-room after morning and evening school; so thinking she was still there, she was going to knock gently at the door, and ask if she was ready, when she heard voices, and so, knowing she was not alone, she sat down in the school-room to wait for her.

In a few minutes Amy came out, leading a little girl by the hand, whose eyes were full of tears, and not noticing Jane at first, she said, "You will not forget to ask pardon again to-night, my child, when you say your prayers." When the child was gone, Amy turned to Jane, saying, "I am afraid I have been keeping you waiting. I did not know you were here."

"That does not signify at all, and I have not been here many minutes. You look very tired, dear Amy, and so pale. I am afraid you are not at all well."

"I do not feel quite well this evening, but it is not of the least consequence; I am only rather tired."

"You do too much, Amy; you never think of yourself, you ought to rest more."

"Oh no, Jane, I cannot do that. As long as I have strength I hope to work. Our Lord did not think of rest when He laboured for us, and if He allows me to work for Him, I must do so to the utmost of the power He gives. But we must go home now, Mrs. Wilson will be waiting tea for us."

Amy did feel tired and unwell this evening; of course all her past exertion told upon her, and to-day she had been much grieved at finding the little girl who had been with her after school had been telling an untruth. Had the children been really her own, she could not have been more interested in them, or more troubled at their faults. She was comforted however now by the hope that this little one was truly sorry for her fault, and she trusted really penitent; she was quite willing to submit to any punishment, and Amy felt it her duty to punish her, that she might remember her fault more deeply. For a week she was to take no part in the singing, and sit alone every day for a quarter of an hour after morning school.

The singing was a great pleasure, and those who

were not allowed to take part in singing hymns of praise to God, felt that they must have done something very displeasing to Him.

Any untruth or deceit Amy always punished more severely than any other faults, knowing how necessary it is to train up a child in perfect truth and openness, and she felt most thankful it was but seldom such punishment was needed. She invariably tried to make a child feel real sorrow for its fault, and take its punishment willingly, as the just sentence on sin; and the sad though calm manner in which she spoke when they had done wrong, always had a great effect on the children, and made them feel that it was sorrow for the offence committed against God, and not anger with them that oppressed her.

Jane had noticed the child's penitent face as she was led out, and Amy's look of sorrow, and she remembered what a very different expression she had often seen, when a child had been openly corrected before the whole school, and punished, whilst mortified vanity and anger filled its heart, and left no room for repentance, and she asked herself which rebuke partook most of the spirit of Him who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.



CHAPTER XIX.

"The time is short! He cometh
Whose love hath set thy task—
A crown of life His guerdon
What other wouldst thou ask?
But let thy consolation—
In toil and vigil be,
There remaineth, there remaineth
A Sabbath rest for thee!"

Songs of Christian Chivalry.

One Thursday evening as Amy was returning home after the girls' night-school was over, (it had gone on regularly ever since it had been commenced two years before,) Miss Ellis asked her to come into the vicarage, as Mr. Ellis wished to speak to her.

Amy went at once and knocked at the study door, Mr. Ellis was disengaged, and so asking her to come in and sit down, he said, "Have you heard from Elverton lately?"

"It is about a fortnight since I had my last letter, Sir," Amy answered.

"Was there any mention made then of the school-mistress leaving?"

"No, Sir, but when I saw her last, she told me she had been long thinking of resigning, she is getting old, and she said she did not think she could go on after Mr. Leslie had left, but he wished her to try for a little time, not to have so many changes at once."

"I suppose then from this advertisement she means to resign at Michaelmas," he said as he passed the National Society's monthly paper to Amy, pointing to the following advertisement; "Wanted at Michaelmas next, a trained mistress for a village school. She must be well qualified to teach, and perfectly capable of managing children and maintaining strict discipline. It is necessary she should be able to teach singing. Salary 40*l*. No house, but comfortable lodgings can be obtained close to the school, on very reasonable terms. Address, the Rev. the Rector, Elverton, Dalton."

Mr. Ellis watched Amy whilst she read it, she sighed at the name of Elverton. He looked very grave and said, "I want to ask you a question, and you must answer me truly. Should you like to undertake that school and return to Elverton? it would be so perfectly natural you should, that much as I should regret such a change for this parish, if you desire it, only tell me so and it shall be arranged. I know how rejoiced they would all be at Elverton to have you back, and from the character the rector would hear of you from every one, I feel no doubt of your obtaining the situation at once, if you like to apply for it."

Amy did not answer directly, the proposition took her quite by surprise, she hardly understood it,—to return to Elverton, her dear happy home—was her first thought, and then came a deep sigh, and the remembrance of the many changes, and with it was breathed an earnest prayer for guidance. When she answered it was with rather a trembling voice. "Thank you, Sir, very much, for thinking of me," she said, "but I do not see that it would be my duty to go to Elverton; and as you are so kind as to be satisfied with me here it seems to me I had better stay, at least if you think it right, Sir."

"Indeed I do, quite right, and I am very thankful you have no wish to change, but knowing your love for Elverton and for your friends there, it seemed hardly fair not to mention it to you. Do you think it would do for Jane? I should be so happy to see her in a good and safe home. Do you know anything of the people she would lodge with? lodgings are mentioned in the advertisement."

"Oh yes, Sir, it is Mrs. Wood she would lodge with; she is such a kind, good person. She came to Elverton with Mrs. Leslie on her marriage, she had lived many years with Mrs. Seymour, Mrs. Leslie's mother, before, and she nursed dear Mrs. Leslie through her illness. I think it would be a great comfort and help to Jane to be with her."

"That is most satisfactory, but do you think I may truly say Jane is perfectly capable of managing children?"

"Indeed I do, Sir; Jane is quite altered; she thinks so differently on the responsibility of teaching, and now so mistrusts herself and looks only to God to guide and strengthen her, that I cannot doubt but that she will go on well."

"You know her so well, and have seen her so constantly in the school, that I feel quite satisfied with your opinion, for I am sure you would never say what you did not think, though it were to oblige your greatest friend. She will not have to go till Michaelmas, that will be a month from this time. You will let her be continually in the school with you; and now I will not detain you any longer. You can do as you think best about mentioning it to Jane to-night; of course it is uncertain whether she can obtain the situation, but I will write by to-morrow's post. Perhaps you would like to take the paper with you."

Amy thanked Mr. Ellis, wished him good evening, and went home.

It happened that this day Jane had received a letter from an aunt, (she too was an orphan,) saying she hoped she did not intend any longer to delay looking out for a situation, since she spoke of her health as recovered. She herself too had begun to fear she might be intruding too long on Mrs. Wilson. She would allow her to pay nothing for lodging, and had only lately at Jane's request consented to receive something for her board. The first weeks of her stay Mrs. Wilson and Amy had shared the expense between them. Amy wished to have paid

all, but Mrs. Wilson would not let her, she said she was as glad as Amy could be that Jane should visit them, and a happy party they usually were. But this evening Jane sat thinking very sadly what she should do, quite dreading the thoughts of leaving her present quiet home. As she leant her head on her hand, feeling quite out of spirits, Amy came in, with her calm happy face, seeming to bring peace and gladness with her. It was late—so they had supper at once, and then Mrs. Wilson being very tired said she would go at once to bed.

As soon as they were alone Jane began to tell Amy of the letter she had had that morning, and her sorrow at feeling she ought to leave. Amy was so glad to have such pleasant tidings for her, and told her of her conversation with Mr. Ellis, and shewed her the advertisement. Her heart warmed as she spoke of Elverton, and she gave Jane a glowing description of the school, the church, and the rectory, and then of the pleasant hours she would have with Mrs. Wood.

"Ah, dear Amy, you ought to be going there," Jane said, "you love it all so much, and how they would rejoice to have you back."

"No, Jane, thank you," Amy said, looking very grave, "I would rather not go back. I loved Elverton very much once, too much, perhaps, for any earthly home. But God has weaned me from it, and I have no wish to return. And besides, I have work here that seems chosen for me, I think I should be wrong to leave it now, when, from

knowing the children well, I am able to be of more use than at first. But I am so thankful, dear Jane, to think you will go there."

"Are you, Amy? Can you be glad your dear Elverton should have such as me for its school-mistress? Do you know, now I begin to think earnestly about taking a school again, I feel more than ever how unfit I am for it."

"It is knowing that you have that feeling, dear Jane, that makes me thankful that you may go there for its sake and your own. If you ever keep that knowledge of your own weakness, and look to God for strength, and strive to do your duty to the best of your power, you will surely teach well."

"But how shall I get on without you to talk to and help me?"

"Perhaps you will look more entirely to God in all difficulties when human aid is withdrawn. You know, Jane, all friendship is dangerous if it is placed before God, or if it seems to hinder the yearnings of the heart after that one only love that can really satisfy; and so God often withdraws friends when we think we need them most, but He who knows all hearts sees that their removal will make us cling more closely to Him. And though we must be parted we shall pray for each other, and now we may feel that there is a tie between us that no distance of time or space can break."

"I trust it will ever last,—but you will write to me very often. And I will try really to shew forth my thankfulness to our Heavenly Father, by serving

Him faithfully with my whole heart.—I see now the importance of many things that used to seem trifles to me. Do you remember our conversation about dress, Amy, a long time ago, the night before that Christmas examination at Alfont that you came to me for?"

"Yes, I do, when you were trimming a new bonnet."

"Well, I did not agree with you then, at least I did not like to shew that I did, but it often came back to my mind afterwards. And now, dear Amy, I see how right you were. I shall try to dress quite like you. I wish there was a particular dress for all school-mistresses, don't you? and then we should never have any trouble in thinking how we ought to dress."

Amy smiled and said, "I have often thought so too, and wished that we were all united together in some society, so that whenever one mistress met another they might meet as friends, joined together in the same work, sisters in Christ. I don't know whether you understand what I mean, for I can hardly tell how to explain."

"Yes, I think I do quite, something like 'the Christian brothers' Mr. Ellis gave us the account of to read. It would be very pleasant, but I suppose it will never be."

"I dare say not, at least not in our time, so we must be knit together as sisters by prayer and love, and by praying for all who are engaged in the same work we may be joined with them in spirit."

"It has always struck me, Amy," Jane said, after a few minutes' pause, "that you look upon being a school-mistress in such a different light from what others do."

"How, dear Jane?"

"Why, you seem to think it so much more important than others do; as if you had entered for life upon a religious duty."

"But surely, Jane, that is the only way to look upon it. When first I thought of it, Mr. Leslie told me, unless I wished to devote myself to God's service, he would much rather I gave up the idea at once, for he said he considered it much too important a work to be undertaken from any other motive. And it seemed such a privilege, to be allowed to choose a state of life in which one might devote one's whole time to the service of God. And my hope is," she added, speaking very gravely and quietly, "to serve God in this office, to which I trust He has called me, as long as life lasts."

"Ah, Amy," Jane said, "now I understand how it was you had no restless longings for change; your mind was made up, you desired nothing but what God chose for you. And, with His gracious help, I trust I too may learn that blessed temper of mind. —I am glad I have one month more of preparation, for I feel as if I were now beginning, all the past seems so useless."

They talked on for some time till the lateness of the hour made them start up in surprise. They put away their work, and walked up stairs together, and

then each went to her own room, in prayer and reflection to deepen the feelings this night's conversation had called forth.

How quickly do the last days of any happy time draw to an end. A month Jane had rejoiced in having before going to Elverton, but as day after day slipped away, and the last week of the month came, she could have wished it had been a year instead.

Mr. Ellis wrote to the rector at Elverton, and he was very glad to engage Jane on Mr. Ellis' recommendation. Amy wrote to Mrs. Wood and told her how dear Jane was to her, and had a kind letter in answer, assuring her that all she could do should be done towards making her friend happy and comfortable.

Amy and Jane had so often talked together of Elverton, that Jane thought she knew the place and its inhabitants well before she had seen it, and could not feel as if she was going to a new home.

She had felt very anxious to know who would succeed her at Alfont, and had prayed that one really fitted for the work might be sent there. And her prayer was answered, for she had the comfort of knowing before she left, that the poor children, she now so bitterly accused herself of neglecting, would be trained in the fear and love of God. It was an unspeakable relief, for it had weighed heavily on her mind, and she could not have undertaken a fresh situation with any comfort, had she not known her former charge were well taken care of.

And now the last day was come. Miss Ellis

most kindly insisted on Amy having a half holiday while she took her place at the school, and so together the two friends set off on their last walk, it was to Furze Bank to bid farewell to Mary Carter. They walked slowly in sweet converse, lingering at their accustomed spots, but with too full hearts now to think much of the lovely view they had so often admired. Mary was lying on her little couch, she had become much weaker in the last year, and was unable to sit up for long together. Her kind heart and warm sympathy entered into all their feelings at parting. She had watched Jane with great interest, and now she felt sorrowful to think she should see her no more. But the sorrow past away as she spoke of the meeting in that land, which she hoped, if God saw fit, soon to reach. They sat with her a long time. At her request Amy read the 21st chapter of Revelation. When it was ended she said she should like to think that in their last meeting on earth, they had thought together of the joys of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, where through God's mercy she humbly hoped they would meet hereafter. When they left, Amy wished her goodbye first and walked on to the little garden-gate. Mary took Jane's hand in both hers, and solemnly and earnestly asked God to bless her. "And now, my dear child," she added, "we part, you to journey on your way and do your work, and I to lie still and pray. But before we part there is one word I would say: I know you will not reject an old woman's advice, though she tells you nothing but what you

know well before. Remember our Blessed Lord tells us that Christians are to be the light of the world. Our lives are to hold out a light that shall shew the way to those who are in darkness. One holy life will help many souls to heaven. Your dear friend has helped many, as you know. I can only say, Go, and do likewise; for her sake and your own you are dear to me. Remember me in your prayers, I will not forget you in mine; and now once more good bye, and God bless and preserve you for ever."

Tears came into Jane's eyes as she tried to thank her, but she could not speak, she leant over her dear old friend and kissed her, and with a full heart left the cottage and joined Amy. What Mary had said brought to her mind Mr. Ellis' words on Amy's life holding out a light to the children, and she prayed that hers might too. They said but little as they walked home. Jane turned and looked at the cottage, before their downward path through the wood hid it from her sight.

"You will always tell me of dear old Mary when you write," she said; "she thinks we shall never meet again, and she seems so weak that one cannot look for her to be here much longer; you will miss her sadly when she is gone."

"Yes, very much, and yet one could not wish to detain her from her longed-for rest, where we may hope all so soon to be. I often think of dear Mrs. Leslie's last words to me: she said so earnestly, 'Oh, how short life now seems to me!' It did not seem

short to me then, but long and very sad, but it does not now. If we look straight on to the end of our journey, we forget all the steep ascents and winding paths that must be passed, and the end looks very near. The *end* of the journey of life we are told, but not what will befall us in our way to it. And I think that teaches us, dear Jane, that we must not brood anxiously on what God has in love withheld from us, but dwell on the joys He has promised to those that endure, and then we shall cheer our fainting spirits."

"Thank you, dear Amy, for those words; I will try to look on to the end, and be careful for nothing, but how to reach that end in safety. Indeed," she said, with a bright smile," I feel generally so happy now that I should be wrong to doubt that He who has brought me out of darkness to His marvellous light, will not sustain me to the end. Oh, Amy, when I think how different I feel now to what I did a year ago, I can hardly believe I am the same person. Do you remember how I used to tell you I should be miserable if I was as thoughtful as you? I did not understand your happiness then, though I often envied you your peace and calmness; but now I feel indeed that there is no real happiness without an earnest purpose to serve God, and that when we try to persuade ourselves that we are happy without, we are clinging to a miserable delusion, that can only be kept up by shutting our eyes to the truth."

"May we learn daily to cling closer to Him who

alone can give rest," Amy answered; they reached the garden gate as she spoke, and went in. After tea they were to go by appointment to the vicarage for Jane to take leave of Mr. and Miss Ellis.

We will not follow her through these leave-takings, all know too well what they are, to wish them described. It will suffice to say that Jane had a long interview with Mr. Ellis in his study, and departed with her pastor's prayers and blessing, feeling strengthened to "run with patience the race set before her."

The two friends sat up late that night, and joined together in prayer for a blessing on Jane's future life before they parted.

They had to get up early, for Jane went by the early train. Mrs. Wilson was down before them to see that breakfast was ready. She was very sorry to lose Jane, but she talked cheerfully, though her heart was full.

"Ah, I shall not be able to keep Amy now," she said, "she will be going to Elverton to see you; so look forward to Christmas, Jane, and when Amy cannot go to you you must come to her."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Wilson, you must come with her," Jane answered, feeling a great difficulty in keeping back the tears; "I shall miss all your kindness, I wish I could thank you as I would for it all."

"You are welcome, my child, I am sure, to all. I wish I could have done more for you."

They looked at the clock and saw it was time to

be off; with many kind words Mrs. Wilson bid Jane good bye, telling her to think of her house as a home where she would be always welcome. Amy went with her to the station. Up and down the platform they walked, unable to say much, till the train was heard in the distance. The hurried farewells were said, the murmured "God bless you," Jane got in, the train whirled on again, the two friends were parted, each to travel on their way, the same journey, though by different roads: the journey to the City that hath foundations.

And here we too will bid them farewell. We will not doubt that they reached at last their Home, though what befell them in the way, the struggles they had to endure, the fight that had to be maintained before the victory was won, we cannot now describe. But that they did endure to the end we will believe, for one earnest purpose now filled *both* their souls, to "do all to the glory of God," and in His strength alone they trusted.

Oh, may He grant that all, those who write and those who read, may so strive to enter in at the strait gate, and ever remember that none have kept its narrow way, but those who at their Master's call forsook all and followed Him, and lived with one motive ruling their whole life, to "do all to the glory of God."